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Honoré de Balzac

LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE

The Human Comedy

MILITARY AND POLITICAL LIFE

VOLUME IV

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MME. DE LANTY TO M. DORLANGE

While he was uttering that sentence, Madame de Lanty had adroitly taken her place behind her husband, and, by means of supplicating and perfectly comprehensible pantomime, was imploring me to accept the position against which I was defending myself.

The *Edition Définitive* of the *Comédie Humaine* by HONORÉ DE BALZAC, now for the first time completely translated into English.

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THE DEPUTY FROM ARCIS. IN TWO VOLUMES. TRANSLATED BY GEORGE BURNHAM IVES, AND ILLUSTRATED WITH EIGHT ETCHINGS. VOL. I.

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THE DEPUTY FROM ARCIS

PART FIRST

THE ELECTION

THE ELECTION

*

It is hardly necessary to observe, before entering upon a description of a provincial election, that the town of Arcis-sur-Aube was not the scene of the events therein described. The arrondissement of Arcis votes at Bar-sur-Aube, which is fifteen leagues from Arcis; there is therefore no deputy from Arcis in the Chamber of Deputies. The reserve demanded by the history of contemporary manners has dictated these precautions. It may be, too, that it is an ingenious device to describe a town as the theatre of events which did not take place there. Several times already, in the course of the COMEDIE HUMAINE, that method has been employed, despite its inconvenience, which consists principally in this —that the frame is thereby often made of as much importance as the canvas.

In the latter part of the month of April, 1839, about ten o'clock in the morning, the salon of Madame Marion, widow of a former receiver-general of the department of the Aube, presented a strange spectacle. Of all the furniture of the apartment, naught remained save the window-curtains, the

ornaments on the mantel-shelf, the chandelier and the tea-table. The Aubusson carpet, taken up a fortnight beforehand, encumbered the front steps of the house, and the floor had just been vigorously rubbed, but without making it any brighter. It was a sort of domestic presage concerning the result of the elections then in preparation throughout the length and breadth of France. It often happens that things are as clever as men. That is an argument in favor of the occult sciences. The old servant of Colonel Giguet, Madame Marion's brother, had finished brushing away the dust that had insinuated itself into the cracks of the floor during the winter. The maid and the cook, with an alacrity that indicated an enthusiasm equal to their attachment, were bringing the chairs from all the rooms in the house and piling them up in the garden. Let us hasten to say that the trees had already put forth their large leaves, through which could be seen a cloudless sky. The spring air and the May sunshine made it possible to open the long door-window as well as the two windows of the salon, which was oblong in shape.

Directing the attention of the two servants to the rear of the salon, the old lady ordered them to arrange the chairs four rows deep, and to leave a passage-way about three feet wide between each two rows. Soon each row presented a front of ten chairs of different varieties. A line of chairs also extended along by the windows and the glass door. At the other end of the salon, facing the forty

chairs, Madame Marion placed three armchairs behind the tea-table, which was covered with a green cloth and upon which she placed a bell. Old Colonel Giguet arrived upon the battle-field just as his sister had conceived the idea of filling the empty spaces on each side of the fireplace with the two benches from her reception-room, notwithstanding the shabby condition of the leather coverings, which already counted twenty-four years of service.

"We can seat seventy people," she exclaimed triumphantly to her brother.

"God grant that we have seventy friends!" replied the colonel.

"If, after we have received the society of Arcis-sur-Aube every evening for twenty-four years, a single one of our regular habitués should fail us at this crisis!"—said the old lady with a threatening expression.

"Nonsense," rejoined the colonel with a shrug of his shoulders, as he interrupted his sister, "I will give you the names of ten who cannot and will not come. In the first place," he said, counting on his fingers, "Antonin Goulard, the sub-prefect, one! Frédéric Marest, the king's attorney, two! Monsieur Olivier Vinet, his deputy, three! Monsieur Martener, the examining magistrate, four! The justice of the peace,—"

"Of course," said the old lady, interrupting her brother in her turn, "I am not foolish enough to expect people who are in office to attend a reception of which the purpose is to give the opposition an

additional deputy. And yet, Antonin Goulard, Simon's playmate in childhood and his schoolfellow, will be very glad to see him chosen deputy; for—"

"Well, well, sister, leave us men to do our part. Where is Simon?"

"He is dressing," she replied. "He did well not to breakfast, for he is very nervous, and, although our young advocate is accustomed to speaking in court, he dreads this meeting as if he were about to face an assemblage of his enemies."

"Faith! I have often had to stand the fire of an enemy's battery; at such times my mind, I don't say my body, never trembled; but, if I had to take my stand here," said the old soldier, walking to the tea-table, "and look at the forty bourgeois who will be sitting in front of me, open-mouthed, with their eyes fastened on mine, and anticipating eloquent and grammatical periods,—why, my shirt would be wet through before I had found my first word."

"However, my dear father, it will be necessary for you to make that effort for me," said Simon Giguet, entering through the small salon; "for if there is, in the whole department of the Aube, a man whose words carry weight, you surely are that man. In 1815,—"

"In 1815," interrupted the wonderfully well preserved little old man, "I did not have to speak, I simply drew up a little proclamation that caused two thousand men to rise in twenty-four hours. And there's a vast difference between putting my

name at the bottom of a paper that will be read by a whole department and speaking to a crowd! Napoléon himself made a failure of that trade. On the 18 Brumaire he talked utter nonsense to the Five Hundred."

"But, my dear father, my whole life, my fortune, my honor are at stake," said Simon. "Just look at one single man and imagine you are speaking to him; you will get through all right."

"*Mon Dieu!* I am only an old woman," said Madame Marion; "but, at such a time, and knowing how much depends on it, why—I could be eloquent!"

"Too eloquent, perhaps!" said the colonel. "And to overshoot the mark is not to hit it. But how is there so much at stake, anyway?" he continued, with a sharp glance at his son. "For two days past you have expressed ideas on the subject of your candidacy that—If my son is not chosen, so much the worse for Arcis, that's all."

Those words, worthy of a father, were in harmony with the whole life of the man who uttered them.

Colonel Giguet, one of the most highly esteemed men in the Grande Armée, was possessed of one of those characters whose basis is perfect uprightness combined with great delicacy of feeling. He never put himself forward; favors must come in search of him; so it was that he remained for eleven years a simple captain of artillery in the guard, in which he was made major in 1813, and lieutenant-colonel in 1814. His almost fanatical attachment to Napoléon

would not permit him to serve the Bourbons at the time of the first abdication. In fact, his devotion to the Emperor in 1815 was so notorious that he would have been banished but for the intervention of the Comte de Gondreville, who succeeded in having his name stricken from the order, and finally obtained for him a retiring pension and the rank of colonel. Madame Marion, born Giguet, had another brother who became colonel of gendarmes at Troyes, and whom she had accompanied to that place. There she married Monsieur Marion, receiver-general of the Aube. The late Monsieur Marion, the receiver-general, had a brother who was first president of an imperial court. That magistrate, being then a simple advocate at Arcis, had lent his name during the Reign of Terror to the famous Malin—of the Aube—representative of the people, for the purchase of the estate of Gondreville. So that all the influence of Malin, become a senator and a count, was at the service of the Marion family. In that way the advocate's brother obtained the office of receiver-general of the Aube at a time when, far from having to choose between thirty eager applicants, the government was very glad to find a subject willing to accept such slippery positions. Marion, the receiver-general, inherited the property of his brother the president, and Madame Marion that of her brother the colonel of gendarmes.

In 1814 the receiver-general suffered reverses. He died simultaneously with the Empire, but his

widow found an income of fifteen thousand francs among the ruins of those various fortunes. Giguet, the colonel of gendarmes, had left his property to his sister, upon learning of the marriage of his brother the artillery officer, who had espoused, about 1806, one of the daughters of a rich banker at Hamburg. Every one knows the extravagant fondness of all Europe for the sublime troopers of the Emperor Napoléon! In 1814, Madame Marion, practically ruined, returned to live at Arcis, her native place, where she purchased one of the finest houses in the town, on the principal square,—a house whose location indicated that it had once been a dependency of the château. As she was accustomed to receive a large number of people at Troyes, where the receiver-general held sway, her salon was thrown open to the notabilities of the liberal party in Arcis. A woman accustomed to salon sovereignty does not readily renounce it. Of all habits those of vanity are the most tenacious. First a Bonapartist, then a liberal—for, by one of the strangest of metamorphoses, the soldiers of Napoléon almost all fell in love with the constitutional system,—Colonel Giguet was, during the Restoration, the natural president of the advisory committee at Arcis, which committee was composed of Grévin the notary, his son-in-law Beauvisage and Varlet the younger, the leading physician of Arcis, Grévin's brother-in-law, and of some other liberal notabilities.

"If our dear child is not elected," said Madame

Marion, after a glance into the reception-room and the garden to see that no one was listening, "he will not get Mademoiselle Beauvisage; for a marriage with Cécile is involved in the success of his candidacy."

"Cécile!" exclaimed the old man, opening his eyes and staring at his sister with an air of stupefaction.

"I fancy that you are the only person in the whole department, brother, who is able to forget the dowry and expectations of Mademoiselle Beauvisage!"

"She is the wealthiest heiress in the department of the Aube," said Simon Giguet.

"But it seems to me that my son is not to be despised," rejoined the old campaigner; "he is your heir, he already has his mother's property, and I myself expect to leave him something more than my bare name!"

"All that put together does not make thirty thousand francs a year, and there are people with that income, to say nothing of their rank, who have already offered themselves, and—"

"And—?" queried the colonel.

"And have been refused!"

"What do the Beauvisages want, in God's name?" exclaimed the colonel, looking from his sister to his son.

It may be thought surprising that Colonel Giguet, brother of Madame Marion, in whose salon the best society of Arcis had assembled every day for

twenty-four years, whose salon echoed all the rumors, all the slander, all the gossip of the department of the Aube,—perhaps it was manufactured there,—should be ignorant of events and facts of that nature; but his ignorance will appear perfectly natural as soon as we have noted the fact that that noble remnant of the old Napoleonic phalanxes went to bed and rose with the fowls, as all old men do who wish to live their whole lives. Therefore he was never present at the confidential conversations. There are in the provinces two sorts of confidential conversations, those which are held officially when everybody is present, playing cards and chattering; and those which *simmer*, like a well-watched soup, when three or four friends only are left in front of the fire, friends whose discretion is sure and who repeat nothing that is said, except by their own firesides to three or four other friends equally discreet. For the past nine years, ever since the triumph of his political principles, the colonel had lived almost outside of society. Rising always with the sun, he had devoted himself to horticulture, he adored flowers and, of all kinds of flowers, he cultivated roses alone. He had the black hands of the professional gardener, he tended his own squares of flowers. His squares! that word reminded him of the squares of multicolored men drawn up on the battle-field. Always in conference with his gardener, he had mingled little, especially during the last two years, in society, of which he caught occasional glimpses. He took but one meal with

the family, dinner; for he rose too early to breakfast with his son and sister. We owe to the efforts of the colonel the famous Giguet rose, with which all lovers of flowers are familiar. The old man, having become a sort of domestic fetich, was exhibited, as may be imagined, on great occasions. Some families are blessed with a demigod of that sort, and decorate themselves with him as with a title.

"I have imagined that I could detect, since the Revolution of July," said Madame Marion to her brother, "an aspiration on Madame Beauvisage's part to live in Paris. Being compelled to remain here as long as her father lives, she has transferred her ambition to the head of her future son-in-law, and the fair lady dreams of the glories of political life."

"Do you love Cécile?" the colonel asked his son.

"Yes, father."

"Does she love you?"

"I think so, father; but it is equally necessary for me to please the grandfather and the mother. Although Goodman Grévin is trying to defeat my election, my success would induce Madame Beauvisage to accept me, for she will hope to govern my actions as she pleases, to be a minister under my name—"

"Ah! a very pretty idea!" cried Madame Marion. "For what does she take us, pray?"

"Whom has she refused?" the colonel asked his sister.

"Why, they say that within three months Antonin

Goulard and the king's attorney, Monsieur Marest, have received equivocal replies which are all they want except a *yes!*"

"Oh! bless my soul!" exclaimed the old man, raising his arms, "what times we live in! Why, Cécile is the daughter of a cap-maker and the grand-daughter of a farmer. Madame Beauvisage wants a Comte de Cinq-Cygne for a son-in-law, does she?"

"Don't sneer at the Beauvisages, brother. Cécile is rich enough to be able to choose a husband anywhere, even in the party to which the Cinq-Cygnes belong. But I hear the door-bell announcing the arrival of some electors, so I leave you, very much regretting that I can not hear what is going to be said."

Although 1839 is, politically speaking, a very long way from 1847, we can still remember the elections that produced the coalition, an ephemeral experiment made by the Chamber of Deputies to carry out the threat of a parliamentary government; a threat *à la* Cromwell which, without a Cromwell, could lead to no other result, under a prince who was the foe of fraud, than the triumph of the present system, wherein the Chambers and the ministers resemble wooden actors moved about by the proprietor of Guignol's show, to the immense satisfaction of the passers-by, who are always wonderstruck.

The arrondissement of Arcis-sur-Aube was at that time in a curious situation,—it believed itself to be free to elect a deputy. From 1816 to 1836 it had

always chosen one of the dullest orators of the Left, one of the seventeen who were all called *great citizens* by the liberal party, to wit, François Keller of the house of Keller Frères, and son-in-law of the Comte de Gondreville. Gondreville, one of the most magnificent estates in France, is situated about a fourth of a league from Arcis. The banker, recently created a count and peer of France, expected undoubtedly to transmit to his son, then thirty years of age, his seat in the Chamber, in order to make him a fit subject some day for a peerage. Already a major on the staff, and one of the favorites of the Prince Royal, Charles Keller had been made a viscount and belonged to the party of the Citizen King's court. The most exalted destiny was apparently in store for a young man immensely rich, full of courage, notoriously devoted to the new dynasty, grandson of the Comte de Gondreville, and nephew of the Maréchale de Carigliano; but that election, so essential to his future, presented some obstacles very difficult to surmount. Since the accession to power of the bourgeois class, Arcis was conscious of a vague desire to exhibit its independence. So that the last election of François Keller had been disturbed by a few republicans, whose red caps and scrubby beards had not intimidated the good people of Arcis overmuch. By working upon the prejudices of the province, the radical candidate might get together some thirty or forty votes. Some of the inhabitants, humiliated to see their town included among the

rotten boroughs of the opposition, joined the democrats, although they were opposed to democracy. In France, when elections are at hand, divers politico-chemical products are evolved in which the laws of natural affinities are overthrown. Now, to elect the young military officer Keller, in 1839, after electing the father for twenty years, would denote genuine electoral servitude, against which the pride of several newly-rich bourgeois rose in revolt, for they deemed themselves quite as good as Malin, Comte de Gondreville, the bankers Keller Frères, the Cinq-Cygnes and even the King of the French himself! And so the numerous partisans of old Gondreville, the king of the department of the Aube, were awaiting a new manifestation of his adroitness, so often demonstrated. In order to avoid endangering the influence of his family in the arrondissement of Arcis, that old statesman would doubtless propose as his candidate some resident of the province, who would retire in favor of Charles Keller and accept some public office; a situation which makes the choice of the people eligible for re-election. When Simon Giguet sounded, on the subject of the election, the ex-notary Grévin, the count's loyal friend, that old gentleman replied that, having no knowledge of the count's intentions, he proposed to make Charles Keller his candidate, and should exert all his influence to secure his election. As soon as that reply of Goodman Grévin became known in Arcis, there was a reaction against him. Although during a notarial service of thirty years,

that Champagne Aristides had possessed the confidence of the town, although he had been Mayor of Arcis from 1804 to 1814 and during the Hundred Days; although the opposition had accepted him for its leader down to the triumph of 1830, a time at which he declined the honor of the mayoralty on the pretext of his great age; and although the town, to testify its regard for him, had then taken his son-in-law, Monsieur Beauvisage, for its mayor, they rebelled against him, and some young people went so far as to accuse him of being in his dotage. The adherents of Simon Giguet turned to Philéas Beauvisage, the mayor, and used him to the better advantage because, without being on bad terms with his father-in-law, he affected an independence which degenerated into coldness, and which his crafty father-in-law allowed him to display, seeing in it an excellent means of extending his own influence over the town of Arcis.

Monsieur le maire, when questioned the day before upon the public square, had declared that he would vote for the first name inscribed on the list of eligible candidates in Arcis, rather than give his vote to Charles Keller, for whom however he had the highest esteem.

"Arcis shall not be a rotten borough any longer," he said, "or I will emigrate to Paris."

Encourage the passions of the moment and you become a hero everywhere, even at Arcis-sur-Aube.

"Monsieur le maire," people said, "has put the seal on the firmness of his character."

Nothing progresses more rapidly than a legal rebellion. During the evening Madame Marion and her friends arranged for the next day a meeting of *independent electors* in the interest of Simon Giguet, the colonel's son. That next day dawned and turned the whole household topsy-turvy to receive the friends upon whose independence they relied. Simon Giguet, the native-born candidate of a small town desirous to return one of its own children, had, as we see, taken advantage of this agitation of the public mind to become the representative of the needs and interests of Champagne Pouilleuse. And yet, all the consideration and the fortune of the Giguet family were the work of the Comte de Gondreville. But is there such a thing as sentiment in election matters? This Scene is written for the information of countries which are so unfortunate as not to know the advantages of national representation, and are consequently in the dark as to the intestine wars and the sacrifices *á la Brutus* by which a small town gives birth to a deputy! A majestic natural spectacle comparable only to that of child-birth: the same struggles, the same unpleasant features, the same agony, the same triumph! The reader may wonder how an only son, of ample means, happened to be, like Simon Giguet, a simple advocate in the little town of Arcis, where advocates are almost useless.

A word concerning the candidate becomes necessary at this point.

Between 1806 and 1813 the colonel had by his

wife, who died in 1814, three children, the eldest of whom, Simon, survived the two younger, one of whom died in 1818, the other in 1825. Until he was left alone, Simon was brought up as a man to whom the practice of a lucrative profession was necessary. Having become an only son, Simon met with a reverse of fortune. Madame Marion had made many plans for her nephew in anticipation of the grandfather's inheritance, the Hamburg banker, but that German died in 1826, leaving his grandson only two thousand francs a year. The banker, being endowed with a vast procreative faculty, had beguiled the tedium of business by the pleasures of paternity; and so he discriminated in favor of the families of eleven other children who were clustered about him and who made him believe, what was by no means improbable, that Simon Giguet would be rich. The colonel was determined that his son should embrace an independent profession. For this reason: The Giguets could look for no favors from the ruling powers while the government of the Restoration endured. Even if Simon had not been the son of an ardent Bonapartist, he belonged to a family all of whose members had incurred the just resentment of the Cinq-Cygne family in connection with the part taken by Giguet, the colonel of gendarmes, and the Marions, Madame Marion included, as witnesses for the prosecution in the famous trial of Messieurs de Simeuse, unjustly convicted in 1805 of the sequestration of the Comte de Gondreville, then a senator and formerly a representative

of the people, who had laid hands upon the fortune of the Cinq-Cygne family. Grévin was not only one of the most important witnesses but one of the most ardent instigators of that affair. The subject of that prosecution still divided the arrondissement of Arcis into two parties, one of which insisted upon the innocence of the accused and consequently was favorably disposed toward the family of Cinq-Cygne, the other favored the Comte de Gondreville and his adherents. If the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, under the Restoration, exerted all the influence the return of the Bourbons gave her to rule as she pleased in the department of the Aube, the Comte de Gondreville was able to offset the royalty of the Cinq-Cygnes by the authority he secretly exerted over the liberals through the medium of Colonel Giguet, the notary Grévin, his own son-in-law Keller, who was always elected deputy from Arcis-sur-Aube in spite of the Cinq-Cygnes, and lastly by the influence he retained in the crown counsels so long as Louis XVIII. lived. Not until after that king's death was the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne able to procure the appointment of Michu as president of the court of first instance at Arcis. She was bent upon giving that place to the son of the steward who died on the scaffold at Troyes, the victim of his devotion to the Simeuse family, and whose full-length portrait adorned her salon, both at Paris and at Cinq-Cygne. The Comte de Gondreville had sufficient influence to prevent the appointment of Michu until 1823.

It was by the Comte de Gondreville's advice that Colonel Giguet's son was bred a lawyer. Simon was the more likely to shine in the arrondissement of Arcis because he was the only advocate there, it being customary for solicitors to try their own cases in such small places. Simon had won some triumphs at the assize court of the department; but he was none the less a favorite subject of the satire of Frédéric Marest, the king's attorney, Olivier Vinet, his substitute, and President Michu, the three ablest functionaries of the tribunal. Simon Giguet, like most men, paid large tribute to the great power of ridicule. He liked to hear himself talk, he gave his views on every subject, he solemnly emitted dull, endless sentences that passed for eloquence in the upper middle class of Arcis. The poor fellow belonged to that class of bores who insist upon explaining everything, even the simplest things. He explained the rain; he explained the causes of the Revolution of July; he explained impenetrable things as well; he explained Louis-Philippe; he explained Monsieur Odillon Barrot; he explained Monsieur Thiers; he explained the Eastern question; he explained Champagne; he explained 1789; he explained the customs tariff and the humanitarians, magnetism and the theory of the Civil List. That thin, bilious-looking young man, of sufficient stature to justify his sonorous nullity—it rarely happens that a very tall man has remarkable faculties—surpassed the puritanism of the men of the Extreme Left, self-conscious as they all were after the

manner of prudes who have intrigues to conceal. Always dressed in black, he wore a white cravat, which he allowed to hang down far below his neck; thus his face seemed to emerge from a horn of white paper, for he retained the high, starched shirt collar, which fashion has very fortunately proscribed. His coats and trousers always seemed to be too large. He had what is called in the provinces dignity, that is to say he held himself very straight and stiff, and was very tiresome: his friend Antonin Goulard accused him of imitating Monsieur Dupin. In very truth the advocate was somewhat overshod with his buckled shoes and coarse black grogram stockings. Protected by the general esteem with which his old father was regarded, and by the influence which his aunt exerted in a small town whose principal inhabitants had been frequenting her salon for twenty-four years, Simon Giguet, already possessed of about ten thousand francs a year, without counting the fees yielded by his practice and his aunt's fortune, which could not fail to fall to him some day, Simon Giguet, we say, had no doubt of his election. Nevertheless the first stroke of the bell, announcing the arrival of the most influential electors, echoed in the ambitious youth's heart, awaking vague apprehensions there. Simon did not shut his eyes to the adroitness or the vast resources of old Grévin, nor to the effect of all the heroic methods to which the ministry would resort in support of the candidacy of a gallant young officer then in Africa, attached to the service of the Prince Royal, son of one of the

ex-great citizens of France and nephew of a marshal's wife.

"It seems to me," he said to his father, "that I have the colic. I feel an insinuating warmth below the pit of the stomach that causes me some anxiety."

"The most experienced soldiers," replied the colonel, "used to have a similar sensation when the cannon began to roar at the outset of a battle."

"What will it be in the Chamber then?" said the advocate.

"The Comte de Gondreville told us," replied the old soldier, "that more than one orator experiences some of the little inconveniences which used to attend the beginning of battles for us old leather-breeches. All that for a few tiresome words.—However, you want to be deputy," said the old man, shrugging his shoulders, "so take the consequences!"

"Triumph, father, means Cécile! Cécile means a great fortune! In these days a great fortune means power."

"Ah! how times have changed! Under the Emperor, all one needed was to be brave!"

"Every age can be summed up in a word!" said Simon, repeating a remark of the old Comte de Gondreville which gives an excellent idea of that old man. "Under the Empire, when they wanted to kill a man, they said: 'He's a coward!' To-day they say: 'He's a swindler!'"

"Poor France! where are they taking you!" cried the colonel. "I am going back to my roses."

"Oh! stay, father! You are the keystone of the arch!"

*

The mayor, Monsieur Philéas Beauvisage, was the first to appear, accompanied by his father-in-law's successor, the busiest notary in town, Achille Pigoult, grandson of an old man who held the office of justice of the peace at Arcis during the Revolution, during the Empire and during the early days of the Restoration. Achille Pigoult was about thirty-two years old; he had been for eighteen years clerk to old Grévin, with no hope of ever becoming a notary. His father, the son of the justice of the peace, had died of what was said to be apoplexy; he had been unfortunate in business. The Comte de Gondreville, with whom old Pigoult was connected by the bonds of 1793, had lent the money required to be deposited as security and had thus facilitated the purchase of Grévin's office by the grandson of the justice who held the original examination in the Simeuse affair. Achille had established his office on the church square, in a house belonging to the Comte de Gondreville, which that peer had let to him at such a low rent that it was easy to see how anxious the cunning politician was to have the leading notary of Arcis always in his hand. Young Pigoult, a little, dried-up man, whose eyes seemed to pierce the green spectacles which did not diminish the maliciousness of his expression, familiar with all the interests of the province and owing to

his long experience in legal matters a certain readiness of speech, was considered a *joker*, and certainly introduced many more witty remarks in his conversation than the majority of the natives in theirs. He was still a bachelor, awaiting an advantageous marriage from the kind offices of his two patrons, Grévin and the Comte de Gondreville. Wherefore Giguet the advocate made a gesture of surprise when he saw Achille beside Monsieur Philéas Beauvisage.

The little notary, whose face was so scarred by the small-pox that it resembled a net with white meshes, presented a striking contrast to the corpulent person of monsieur le maire, whose face resembled a full moon, but a moon of a jovial turn of mind. The lily and rose complexion was heightened in Philéas by an amiable smile, due not so much to any special amiability of disposition as to that tendency of the lips which the word *poupin* has been invented to describe. Philéas Beauvisage was blessed with such abundant self-satisfaction that he always smiled at everybody under all circumstances. His *poupin* lips would have smiled at a funeral. The animation which abounded in his childlike blue eyes did not contradict that everlasting, intolerable smile. That inward satisfaction passed the more readily for benevolence and amiability in that Philéas had created a language of his own, remarkable for the immoderate use of the forms of courtesy. He always *had the honor*, he added to all his inquiries relative to the health of persons not present the

adjectives *dear, good* or *excellent.* He lavished complimentary phrases in regard to the petty miseries or petty joys of human life. He thus concealed under a deluge of commonplaces his incapacity, his absolute lack of education, and a weakness of character which can be expressed only by the somewhat antiquated word *weathercock.* But have no fear! that weathercock had for the axis upon which it revolved the fair Madame Beauvisage, Séverine Grévin, the noted woman of the arrondissement. And so, when Séverine heard of what she called Monsieur Beauvisage's freak, apropos of the election, she said to him—it was that very morning:

"It wasn't a bad idea of yours to put on independent airs; but you shall not go to the Giguet meeting without Achille Pigoult, and I have told him to call for you!"

To give Beauvisage Achille Pigoult for his mentor, was simply to send a spy of the Gondreville party to the Giguet meeting. So that everyone can now imagine the grimace that distorted Simon's puritan face when he was compelled to extend a friendly greeting to an habitué of his aunt's salon, an influential elector, in whom he at once detected a foe.

"Ah!" he said to himself, "I did very wrong to refuse to provide the money for his deposit when he asked me for it! Old Gondreville was brighter than I.—Good morning, Achille," he said aloud, assuming a jaunty air. "You are going to put a drag on my wheels, I suppose!"

"I don't think that your meeting is a conspiracy

against the independence of our votes," rejoined the notary with a smile. "Aren't we playing a fair game?"

"Fair game!" echoed Beauvisage.

Whereupon the mayor laughed that expressionless laugh with which some persons conclude every sentence, and which should be called the *refrain* of conversation. Monsieur le maire then assumed what we must call his *third position*, standing straight, his chest bent in, his hands behind his back. He wore a black coat and trousers, and was resplendent in a white waistcoat, thrown partly open in such way as to show two diamond studs worth several thousand francs.

"We will fight and be none the less good friends," said Philéas. "That is the essence of constitutional manners! Ha! ha! ha! That's how I understand the alliance of monarchy and liberty. Ha! ha! ha!"

Thereupon monsieur le maire took Simon's hand, saying:

"How are you, my dear friend? Your dear aunt and our worthy colonel are as well to-day doubtless as they were yesterday—at least it is fair to presume so.—Ha! ha! ha!" he added, with an air of perfect beatitude, "a little disturbed perhaps by the ceremony that is about to take place. Ah! on my word, young man, we are entering on a political career. Ha! ha! ha!—This is our first step. There's no drawing back—it's a great risk and I prefer that you, rather than I, should embark upon the stormy, tempestuous sea of the Chamber,—hi! hi!—however

agreeable it may be for a man to feel that in his person—hi! hi! hi!—resides one four hundred and fifty-third of the sovereign power of France!—Hi! hi! hi!"

Philéas Beauvisage's voice had a pleasant sonorousness quite in harmony with the full curves of his pumpkin-colored face, with his broad back and his inflated chest. That voice, which resembled a tenor in volume, had a velvety softness like a baritone, and there was a silvery tinkle in the laugh with which Philéas accompanied the ends of his sentences. If God had desired a specimen of the provincial bourgeois in His terrestrial paradise, to complete His collection, He could not have made with His hands a finer and more perfect specimen than Philéas Beauvisage.

"I admire the devotion of those who can determine to throw themselves into the tempests of political life. Eh! eh! eh! to do that one needs nerves that I have not. Who would ever have said in 1812 or 1813 that we should reach this point? For my part I am ready for anything, at a time when asphalt, India rubber, railroads and steam are changing the ground we walk on, the style of overcoats, and distances—Eh! eh!"

These last words were largely flavored with the laugh with which Philéas embellished the poor jests in which bourgeois delight; but he accompanied them with a gesture which he had made his own: he clenched his right fist and inserted it in the hollowed palm of his left hand, and kneaded it

gleefully. That manœuvre coincided with his laugh on the frequent occasions when he thought that he had said a good thing.

Perhaps it is superfluous to say that Philéas was looked upon in Arcis as a most amiable and delightful man.

"I will try," Simon Giguet responded, "to represent worthily—"

"The sheep of Champagne," retorted Achille Pigoult quickly, interrupting his friend.

The candidate swallowed the epigram without replying to it, for he was obliged to greet two other electors. One was the proprietor of *Le Mulet*, the best inn at Arcis, located on the principal square at the corner of Rue de Brienne. The worthy innkeeper, one Poupart, had married the sister of a man-servant in the employ of the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, the famous Gothard, one of the prominent performers in the prosecution. In due time Gothard was acquitted. Poupart, although he was one of the most devoted partisans of the Cinq-Cygnes to be found in Arcis, had been sounded within a day or two by Colonel Giguet's servant so perseveringly and dexterously, that he believed that he was playing a trick on the mortal enemy of the Cinq-Cygnes by exerting his influence in favor of Simon Giguet's election, and he had conversed upon that subject with a druggist named Fromaget, who, as he did not receive the trade of the Château de Gondreville, asked nothing better than to join a cabal against the Kellers. Those two prominent

members of the petty bourgeoisie were able, by virtue of their business connections, to control a certain number of floating votes, for they advised a multitude of men who cared nothing whatever for the political opinions of the candidates. The advocate took possession of Poupart and turned the druggist Fromaget over to his father, who came in and greeted the electors already arrived. The sub-engineer of the arrondissement, the secretary to the municipality, four bailiffs, three solicitors, the clerk of the local court and the clerk to the justice of the peace, the receiver of taxes and the recorder, two physicians, rivals of Grévin's brother-in-law Varlet, a miller named Laurent Coussard, leader of the republican party of Arcis, Philéas's two deputies, the printer-publisher of Arcis and a dozen or more bourgeois entered one after another, and walked about the garden in groups, waiting until the assemblage should be sufficiently numerous for the meeting to open. At last, toward noon, some fifty persons, all in their Sunday best, took their seats on the chairs Madame Marion had arranged for them, the majority having come from curiosity to see the beautiful salons which were so celebrated throughout the arrondissement. The windows were left open, and soon there was such absolute silence that the rustle of Madame Marion's silk dress could be distinctly heard, as, unable to resist the temptation, she stole down into the garden and took up a position where she could hear the electors. The cook, the chambermaid and the manservant stood

in the dining-room and shared the emotions of their masters.

"Messieurs," said Simon Giguet, "some of you desire to do my father the honor of offering him the chairmanship of this meeting; but Colonel Giguet requests me to express his acknowledgments to you, with all the gratitude induced by that desire, which he looks upon as a reward for his services to his country. We are in my father's house, he considers it his duty to decline the honor, and he suggests the name of an honorable merchant, upon whom your suffrages have conferred the chief magistracy of the town, Monsieur Philéas Beauvisage."

"Bravo! bravo!"

"We are agreed, I believe, upon the wisdom of adopting for this meeting—an essentially amicable occasion, but entirely free, and in no way binding upon the great preparatory meeting at which you will question the candidates and weigh their deserts —of adopting, I say, the—constitutional rules of the—elective Chamber."

"Yes! yes!" the assemblage exclaimed with one voice.

"I have the honor therefore, in accordance with the desire of the meeting, to request Monsieur le maire to take the chair."

Philéas rose and crossed the salon, conscious that he had become as red as a cherry. And when he was behind the table, he saw, not a hundred eyes, but a hundred thousand candles. The sun, too,

seemed to be playing the part of a conflagration in the room, and he had, to use his own expression, a salt-store in his throat.

"Thank them!" said Simon in an undertone.

"Messieurs—"

There was such a profound silence that Philéas had an attack of colic.

"What shall I say, Simon?" he asked in a low tone.

"Well?—"said Achille Pigoult.

"Messieurs," said the advocate, stung by the little notary's cruel interpellation, "the honor you confer upon Monsieur le maire may well take him by surprise without astonishing him."

"That is how it is," said Beauvisage; "I am too sensible of the compliment paid me by my fellow-citizens not to be exceedingly flattered by it."

"Bravo!" cried the notary all by himself.

"May the devil take me," said Beauvisage to himself, "if they ever get me again where I have to make a speech!"

"Will Messieurs Fromaget and Marcelin undertake the duties of inspectors?" said Simon Giguet.

"It would be more regular," said Achille Pigoult, rising, "for the meeting itself to elect the two members, if we are to imitate the Chamber."

"That would be the better way," said the bulky Monsieur Mollot, the clerk of the court; "otherwise what we are doing now would be a farce, and we should not be free. Why shouldn't we do everything as Monsieur Simon says, in that case?"

Simon whispered a few words to Beauvisage, who rose to give birth to a "Messieurs!" which might be said to be *of thrilling interest.*

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur le président," said Achille Pigoult, "but your duty is to preside, not to discuss."

"Messieurs, if we are—to conform—to parliamentary customs," said Beauvisage, prompted by Simon, "I will request—the honorable Monsieur Pigoult—to address you—from this table—"

Pigoult walked quickly to the tea-table, stood there with his fingers resting lightly on the edge, and demonstrated his audacity by speaking without embarrassment,—almost like the illustrious Monsieur Thiers, as follows:

"It was not I, messieurs, who made the suggestion that we should imitate the Chamber; for hitherto the Chambers have seemed to me to be truly inimitable; nevertheless, I could readily conceive that an assemblage of some sixty or more notables of Champagne should provide itself with a chairman, for no flock can do without a shepherd. If we had voted by secret ballot, I am very sure that the name of our estimable mayor would have received your unanimous suffrages; his opposition to the candidate supported by his kinsfolk proves that he possesses civic courage in the highest degree, as he is brave enough to disregard the strongest of all ties, those of the family! To place one's country before one's family requires such a mighty wrench, that, in order to accomplish it, we are always compelled to

remind ourselves that Brutus has been looking down upon us from his judgment-seat on high for the past two thousand five hundred and some odd years. It seems natural to Master Giguet, who is entitled to the credit of divining your wishes relative to the chairmanship, to act as our guide once more in the matter of inspectors; but, by approving my observation, you expressed your opinion that once was enough, and you were right! Our common friend, Simon Giguet, who is to come forward as a candidate, would have the air of coming forward as a master, and might thereupon lose the benefit in our minds of the modest attitude assumed by his father. Now what does our worthy chairman do when he accepts the method of presiding suggested to him by the candidate? he takes away our liberty! I ask you: is it proper for the chairman of our choice to tell us to choose the two inspectors by a rising vote? Why, that is in itself a selection, messieurs! Should we be free to choose? Can a man remain seated when his neighbor stands? It would be suggested, I imagine, that everybody should rise, as a matter of courtesy; and, as we should all rise for each one of us, there would be no choice, for each of us would necessarily be unanimously elected."

"He is right," said the sixty electors.

"Let each of us therefore write two names on a ballot, and they who shall take their places beside Monsieur le président will be entitled to look upon themselves as two ornaments to society; they will

have authority, conjointly with Monsieur le président, to decide as to the result of subsequent rising votes. We are here, I believe, to promise to some candidate such influence as each of us has at his disposal at the preparatory meeting which will be attended by all the electors of the arrondissement. This is a serious matter, I solemnly declare. Is not a four-hundredth part of the power of the State involved, as Monsieur le maire observed just now, with the quick wit for which he is noted and which we all appreciate so highly?"

During this harangue Colonel Giguet was engaged in cutting a sheet of paper into small slips and Simon sent for pens and an inkstand. The meeting was suspended.

This preliminary discussion concerning the form of procedure had disturbed Simon beyond measure and had aroused the attention of the sixty bourgeois present. Soon they began to write their ballots and the crafty Pigoult succeeded in securing the choice of Monsieur Mollot, the clerk of the court, and Monsieur Godivet, the recorder. That result of course displeased Fromaget, the druggist, and Marcelin, the solicitor.

"You have served," said Achille Pigoult to them, "as the instruments by which we have made our independence manifest; you should be more proud to be rejected than if you had been chosen."

Everybody laughed. Simon Giguet restored silence by addressing the chairman, whose shirt was already moist and who summoned all his courage to say:

"Monsieur Simon Giguet has the floor."

"Messieurs," said the advocate, "I beg leave to thank Monsieur Achille Pigoult, who, although our meeting is entirely friendly—"

"It is a meeting preliminary to the great preliminary meeting," observed Marcelin, the solicitor.

"That is what I was about to explain," rejoined Simon. "I thank Monsieur Achille Pigoult above all for having introduced parliamentary procedure in all its rigor. This is the first time that the arrondissement of Arcis will make use freely—"

"Freely!" echoed Pigoult, interrupting the orator.

"Freely!" shouted the meeting.

"Will make use freely," continued Simon Giguet, "of its rights in the great battle of the general election to the Chamber of Deputies; and as we shall have, within a few days, a meeting of all the electors to pass upon the merits of the candidates, we should esteem ourselves very fortunate in having this opportunity to become accustomed here, among ourselves, to the usages of such meetings; we shall be the better equipped to deliberate concerning the political future of the town of Arcis, for the question at issue to-day is whether a town shall be substituted for a family, the province for a single man—"

Simon thereupon gave the history of the elections for twenty years past. While approving the successive elections of François Keller, he said that the moment had come to shake off the yoke of the house of Gondreville. Arcis must not be a liberal

fief any more than a fief of the Cinq-Cygnes. There were springing up in France, at that moment, advanced theories of government, which the Kellers did not represent. Charles Keller, having become a viscount, belonged to the court party; he would have no independence at all, for, in presenting him as a candidate for their suffrages, his sponsors thought much more of securing for him the succession to his father's peerage than the succession to a seat in the Chamber, etc., etc. And finally Simon offered himself for the choice of his fellow-citizens, promising to take his seat beside the illustrious Monsieur Odillon Barrot, and never to desert the glorious banner of progress. Progress! one of the words behind which people strove at that time to marshal many more treacherous ambitions than ideas; for, after 1830, it represented nothing more than the pretensions of a few famished democrats. Nevertheless that word still produced much effect in Arcis, and gave an appearance of solidity to him who inscribed it on his banner. To style one's self a man of progress was to proclaim one's self a philosopher in all directions and a puritan in politics. That was the formula for declaring in favor of railroads, mackintoshes, penitentiaries, wood-paving, abolition of slavery, savings banks, seamless shoes, illuminating gas, asphalt sidewalks, universal suffrage and the reduction of the Civil List. Furthermore, it was a declaration against the treaties of 1815, against the elder branch, against the Colossus of the North, perfidious Albion, against all the

enterprises of the government, good or bad. As we see, the word progress might mean *no* as well as *yes!*—It was a refurbishing of the word *liberalism*, a new password for newly-risen ambitions.

"If I rightly understand what we are here for," said Jean Violette, a hosiery manufacturer who had purchased the Beauvisage plant two years before, "it is to agree, all of us, to do all we can to help elect Monsieur Simon Giguet deputy in place of Comte François Keller. If we all understand that we're to combine for that purpose, why, all we have to do is just to say so."

"That would be coming to the point too fast! Political affairs can't be rushed through like that, for in that case they would not be politics at all!" cried Pigoult, as his grandfather, eighty-six years of age, entered the room. "The last speaker assumes to decide what, in my feeble opinion, should be properly discussed. I claim the floor."

"Monsieur Achille Pigoult has the floor," said Monsieur Beauvisage, able at last to utter that phrase with municipal and constitutional dignity.

"Messieurs," said the little notary, "if there is one house in Arcis where no voice should be raised against the influence of the Comte de Gondreville and the Kellers, is not this the house?—The excellent Colonel Giguet is the only inmate of this house who has not felt the effects of the senatorial power, for he certainly never asked any favors of the Comte de Gondreville, who caused his name to be stricken from the list of those proscribed in 1815,

and secured for him the pension he now enjoys, without the venerable colonel, the glory of us all, lifting a finger."

A murmur complimentary to the veteran greeted that sentence.

"But," continued the orator, "the Marions are covered with the count's benefactions. Except for his protection, the late Colonel Giguet would never have commanded the gendarmerie of the Aube. The late Monsieur Marion would never have been president of the imperial court except for the support of the count, to whom I shall always be under obligation!—You will not think it strange therefore that I am his advocate in this presence!—Indeed there are few people in our arrondissement who have not received favors from that family."

There was a commotion among the audience.

"A candidate takes his place in the witness-chair," continued Achille warmly, "and I have the right to scrutinize his life before investing him with my powers. Now I do not choose to have an ingrate for my deputy, for ingratitude is like misfortune: one instance leads to another. We have been, you say, the stepping-stone of the Kellers; ah! but what I have just heard leads me to fear that we are to be the stepping-stone of the Giguets. We live in a positive age, do we not? Very good, let us consider what will be the results of the election of Simon Giguet, so far as the arrondissement of Arcis is concerned. They talk about independence! Simon, of whom I speak slightingly as a candidate, is my

friend, as he is the friend of all who listen to me, and personally I should be delighted to see him become an orator of the Left, take his place between Garnier-Pagès and Laffitte, but what will the arrondissement gain by it?—The arrondissement will have lost the support of the Comte de Gondreville and the Kellers. We shall all have need of them both within five years. We go to see the Maréchale de Carigliano to obtain the discharge of some rascal who draws an unlucky number. We resort to the influence of the Kellers in many matters that are decided upon their recommendation. We have always found the old Comte de Gondreville ready to do us a service: that a man is from Arcis is all that is necessary to be admitted to his presence without cooling one's heels in the antechamber. Those three families know everybody in Arcis.—Where is the strong-box of the Giguet family, and what will its influence amount to in the departments?—What credit will it have on the Bourse at Paris? If it becomes necessary to rebuild in stone our wretched wooden bridge, will the Giguets obtain the requisite funds from the department and the coffers of the State?—By electing Charles Keller we prolong a compact of alliance and friendship which, up to this day, has been productive of nothing but advantage to us. By electing my worthy, my excellent schoolfellow, my good friend Simon Giguet, we shall suffer for it until the day that he becomes a minister! I know his innate modesty so well that I do not think he

will contradict me if I express some doubt of his very speedy elevation to that dignity!"—Laughter. —"I attended this meeting in order to oppose a step which I consider fatal to this arrondissement. Charles Keller belongs to the court! some one will say. Why, so much the better! we shall not have to pay the cost of his apprenticeship in politics, he knows the needs of the province, he is familiar with parliamentary customs, he is nearer to being a statesman than my friend Simon, who will not pretend that he has fashioned himself into a Pitt or a Talleyrand in our little town of Arcis."

"Danton went from this town!" cried Colonel Giguet, furious at those extremely just extemporaneous remarks.

"Bravo!"

The word was an acclamation; sixty persons were clapping their hands.

"My father is very bright," said Simon Giguet to Beauvisage, in an undertone.

"I do not understand," said the old colonel, springing suddenly to his feet, as a hot flush overspread his face, "I do not understand why the bonds that unite us to the Comte de Gondreville should be dragged into election discussions. My son's fortune comes from his mother, he has never asked any favors from the Comte de Gondreville. If the count had never lived Simon would be what he is: the son of a colonel of artillery who owes his rank to his services, and an advocate whose political opinions have not changed. I would say aloud and

to the Comte de Gondreville's face: 'We elected your son-in-law twenty years; to-day we propose to prove that in electing him we were acting voluntarily, and we take a native of Arcis, in order to show that the old spirit of 1789, to which you owe your fortune, still lives in the country of the Dantons, the Malins, the Grévins, the Pigoults and the Marions.' —That's all I have to say!"

And the old man took his seat.

Thereupon there was a great uproar. Achille opened his mouth to reply. Beauvisage, who would not have considered himself chairman unless he jangled his bell, added to the confusion by demanding silence. It was then two o'clock.

"I will venture to remind the honorable Colonel Giguet, whose feelings it is easy to understand, that he took the floor without permission, which is contrary to parliamentary custom," said Achille Pigoult.

"I do not think it necessary to call the colonel to order," said Beauvisage. "He is the father—"

Silence was restored.

"We didn't come here," cried Fromaget, "to say *amen* to whatever the Messieurs Giguet, father and son, choose to say."

"No, no!" cried the meeting.

"This is going badly!" said Madame Marion to her cook.

"Messieurs," said Achille, "I confine myself to asking my friend Simon Giguet the categorical question, what he proposes to do in our interest?"

"Yes! yes!"

"Since when," said Simon Giguet, "have worthy citizens like those of Arcis chosen to make the sacred mission of deputy the subject of barter and sale?"

It is difficult to realize the effect produced by noble sentiments upon an aggregation of men. They applaud high-sounding maxims, but they vote none the less for the degradation of their country, just as the galley-slave, who longs for the punishment of Robert Macaire when he sees the play, goes away and murders Monsieur Germeuil or somebody else.

"Bravo!" cried several pure-blooded Giguet electors.

"You will send me to the Chamber, if you send me there at all, to represent principles, the principles of 1789! to be one of the ciphers, if you will, of the opposition, but to vote with the opposition, to warn the government, to make war on abuses, and to demand progress in everything—"

"What do you mean by progress? So far as we are concerned progress would consist in putting Champagne Pouilleuse under cultivation," said Fromaget.

"Progress? I propose to explain it as I understand it!" cried Giguet, irritated by the interruption.

"It means the Rhine frontier for France," said the colonel, "and the destruction of the treaties of 1815!"

"It means that wheat is always to be sold at a

high price, and bread to be always cheap," cried Achille Pigoult mockingly, thinking that he was perpetrating a witticism by repeating one of the nonsensical catch-phrases so popular in France.

"It means the happiness of all, secured by the triumph of humanitarian doctrines."

"What did I say?" the cunning notary inquired of his neighbors.

"Hush! silence! let us hear!" exclaimed several curious bourgeois.

"Messieurs," said the bulky Mollot, with a smile, "the discussion is beginning; give your attention to the speaker, let him explain his views."

"In every period of transition, messieurs," resumed Simon Giguet gravely, "and the present is one of those periods—"

"Baa! baa!" exclaimed a friend of Achille Pigoult, who was a master of the art—a sublime art at election time—of ventriloquism.

A general laugh ran through the assemblage, which was Champenois before everything. Simon Giguet folded his arms and waited until the storm of laughter had passed over.

"If it was the purpose of that interruption to give me a lesson," he resumed, "to remind me that I march with the glorious flock of the defenders of humanity, who utter cry upon cry, issue book upon book, of the immortal priest who pleads for dismembered Poland, of the courageous pamphleteer who keeps watch upon the Civil List, of the philosophers who demand sincerity in the conduct of our

institutions, then I thank my unknown interrupter! To me progress means the fulfilment of all the promises made to us at the Revolution of July, it means electoral reform, it means—"

"So you're a democrat, are you?" queried Achille Pigoult.

"No!" replied the candidate. "Is it to be a democrat to desire the regular, legitimate development of our institutions? To me progress means the re-establishment of brotherhood between the members of the great French family; and we can not blind our eyes to the fact that much suffering—"

*

At three o'clock Simon Giguet was still giving his idea of progress, and some of his audience were giving utterance to rhythmical snoring which denoted sound sleep. The malevolent Achille Pigoult had urged everybody to listen religiously to the orator, who floundered about and was lost to sight in a sea of phrases and periphrases. At that moment several groups of bourgeois, electors and non-electors, were standing in front of the château of Arcis, whose main gateway opened on the square, at right angles to Madame Marion's door. The square is a point at which several roads and several streets converge. There is a covered market there, and opposite the château, on the other side of the square,—which is neither paved nor macadamized, so that the rain hollows out little ravines,—extends a magnificent promenade called the Avenue of Sighs. Is it so called in honor of or by way of rebuke to the women of the town? That ambiguous appellation is doubtless an example of provincial wit. Two beautiful cross-paths, bordered by old lindens with very dense foliage, lead from the square to a circular boulevard which forms another promenade, neglected like all promenades in the provinces, which are much more noticeable for their heaps of undisturbed filth than for throngs of animated promenaders like those in Paris.

At the height of the discussion, to which Achille Pigoult, with the self-possession and courage of an orator of the real Parliament, imparted all the elements of drama, four persons were walking in a row under the lindens of one of the cross-paths of the Avenue of Sighs. When they reached the square, they stopped by common accord and looked at the people of Arcis who were buzzing about in front of the château, like bees returning to their hive at night. Those four persons were the whole ministerial party of Arcis: the sub-prefect, the king's attorney, his deputy, and Monsieur Martener, the examining magistrate. The president of the court was, as we already know, a partisan of the elder branch and a devoted adherent of the house of Cinq-Cygne.

"No, I don't understand the government!" the sub-prefect repeated, pointing to the groups, which were growing more numerous. "At such a serious crisis I am left without instructions!"

"You resemble many other people in that respect!" observed Monsieur Olivier Vinet with a smile.

"What have you against the government?" asked the king's attorney.

"The ministry is sadly embarrassed," said young Martener; "they know that this arrondissement belongs to the Kellers in a certain sense, and they will be very careful not to run counter to them. They have to deal cautiously with the only man who can be compared to Monsieur de Talleyrand.

THE AVENUE OF SIGHS

"Well, Monsieur Groslier?" said the sub-prefect, walking forward to talk with the commissioner a few steps away from his three companions.

"Monsieur," replied the commissioner of police in a low tone, "Monsieur le préfet bade me tell you a sad piece of news: Monsieur le Vicomte Charles Keller is dead."

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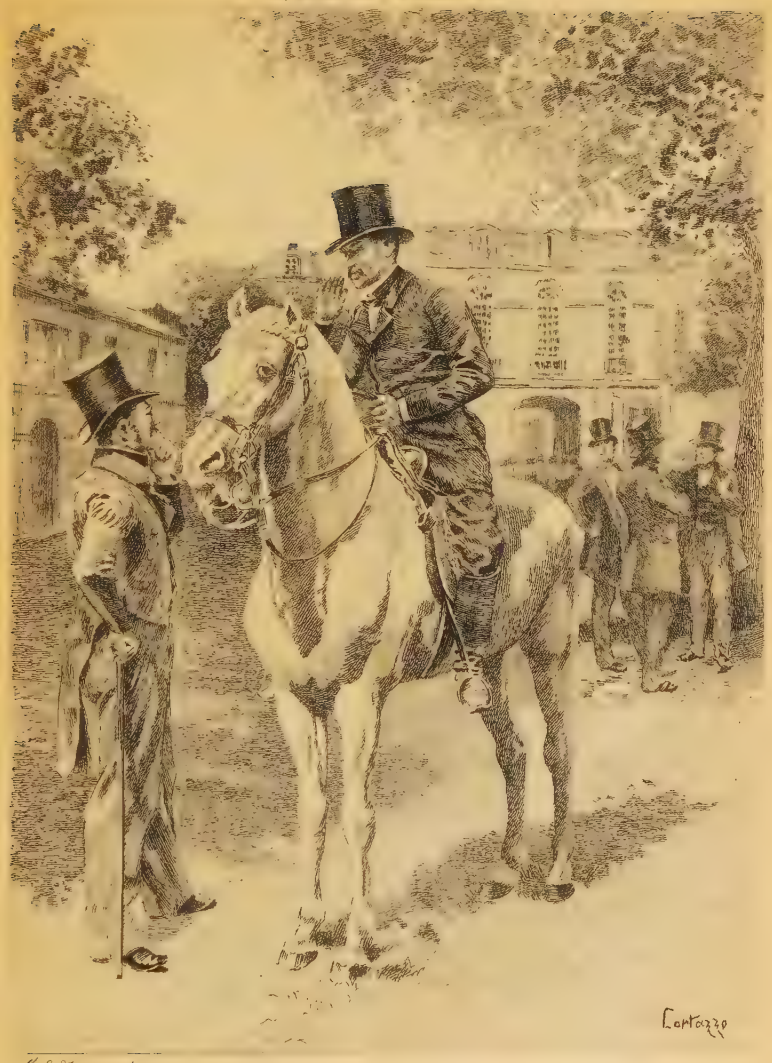

F. E. Jeannin

You must send the commissioner of police to the Comte de Gondreville, not to the prefect."

"Meanwhile," said Frédéric Marest, "the opposition is bestirring itself, and you see what Colonel Giguet's influence is! Our mayor, Monsieur Beauvisage, is presiding at this preliminary meeting."

"After all," said Olivier Vinet slyly to the subprefect, "Simon Giguet is a friend of yours, and a former schoolfellow; he will join Monsieur Thiers's party and you risk nothing by favoring his election."

"The present ministry may turn me out before it falls. We know when we are removed, but we never know when we are to be reappointed," said Antonin Goulard.

"Collinet, the grocer!—He makes the sixty-seventh elector who has gone into Colonel Giguet's," said Monsieur Martener, who exercised his profession of examining magistrate by counting the electors.

"If Charles Keller is the ministerial candidate," continued Antonin Goulard, "they ought to have notified me, and not have given Simon Giguet time to work on people's minds."

The four walked slowly along to the point where the boulevard ends and the public square begins.

"There's Monsieur Groslier!" said the magistrate, pointing to a man on horseback.

The horseman in question was the commissioner of police; he spied the government of Arcis assembled in a body on the public highway, and he rode toward the four functionaries.

"Well, Monsieur Groslier?" said the sub-prefect, walking forward to talk with the commissioner a few steps away from his three companions.

"Monsieur," replied the commissioner of police in a low tone, "Monsieur le préfet bade me tell you a sad piece of news: Monsieur le Vicomte Charles Keller is dead. The news reached Paris the day before yesterday by telegraph and the two Messieurs Keller, the Comte de Gondreville and the Maréchale de Carigliano, the whole family, in fact, have been at Gondreville since yesterday. Abd-el-Kader has resumed offensive operations in Africa and the war is being carried on with great fury. The poor young man was one of the first victims of the renewal of hostilities. You will very soon receive confidential instructions concerning the election, Monsieur le préfet told me."

"From whom?" inquired the sub-prefect.

"If I knew, it would no longer be confidential," replied the commissioner. "Monsieur le préfet himself does not know. It will be a secret between yourself and the minister, he told me."

And he rode on, after the exultant sub-prefect had placed his finger on his lips to enjoin silence.

"Well, what news from the prefecture?" inquired the king's attorney, when Antonin Goulard returned to the group he had left.

"Nothing could be more satisfactory," he replied mysteriously, walking fast as if he proposed to leave the other magistrates.

As they walked toward the centre of the square

in silence, for the three magistrates were somewhat annoyed by the sub-prefect's assumed haste, Monsieur Martener spied old Madame Beauvisage, Philéas's mother, surrounded by almost all of the bourgeois on the square, to whom she seemed to be telling a story. A solicitor named Sinot, who was employed by the royalists of the arrondissement of Arcis and had abstained from attending the Giguet meeting, left the group and ran to Madame Marion's door, where he rang violently.

"What's the matter?" said Frédéric Marest, dropping his monocle and informing the sub-prefect and the examining magistrate of that circumstance.

"The matter is, messieurs," replied Antonin Goulard, seeing no further advantage to be gained by keeping a secret which would soon be divulged in another quarter, "the matter is that Charles Keller has been killed in Africa, and that that occurrence makes Simon Giguet's chances very promising! You know Arcis, Charles Keller was the only possible ministerial candidate. Any other will find all the cross-roads patriotism opposed to him."

"The idea of such an idiot being elected!" laughed Olivier Vinet.

The deputy king's attorney, then about twenty-three years of age, the eldest son of one of the most famous of procureurs-général, whose accession to power dates from the Revolution of July, very naturally owed his position in the public prosecutor's

office to his father's influence. That procureur-général, who represents the town of Provins in the Chamber of Deputies to this day, is one of the buttresses of the Centre. And so the son, whose mother was a Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf, had a self-assurance, in the performance of his duties as well as in his general bearing, which revealed the father's influence. He expressed his opinion of men and things without ceremony, for he hoped not to remain long in the town of Arcis but to become king's attorney at Versailles, an infallible stepping-stone to a post in Paris. The free-and-easy manner of young Vinet and the sort of judicial conceit due to the certainty of making his way, were the more annoying to Frédéric Marest in that his young subordinate's disrespectful manners were supported by the most biting wit. The king's attorney, a man of forty, who had spent six years under the Restoration working his way up to first deputy and whom the Revolution of July had left in oblivion in the prosecutor's office at Arcis, although he had eighteen thousand francs a year, was in a constant state of perplexity between the wish to stand well in the eyes of a procureur-général who might become Keeper of the Seals as so many lawyer-deputies have done, and the necessity of maintaining his dignity. Olivier Vinet was thin and fair, with an insipid face, set off by two little green eyes full of malice; he was one of those scoffing youths, addicted to dissipation, who have the art of assuming the stiff, haughty, pedantic air with which

magistrates arm themselves when they are once upon the bench. The tall, stout, heavy, solemn king's attorney had invented within a few days a system by means of which he got even with the irritating Vinet: he treated him as a father treats a spoiled child.

"Olivier," he replied, putting his hand on his deputy's shoulder, "a man of your breadth of vision should consider that Master Giguet may be chosen deputy. You would have said your say as plainly before everybody in Arcis as among friends."

"There's something against Giguet," observed Monsieur Martener.

That excellent young man, rather sluggish, but of great capacity,—he was the son of a physician at Provins,—owed his place to Vinet, the procureur-général, who was for a long while an advocate at Provins, and who was the patron of the people of that town as the Comte de Gondreville was the patron of the people of Arcis.—(*See Pierrette.*)

"What is it?" said Antonin.

"The cross-roads patriotism is very bitter against a man who is forced on the electors," replied the magistrate; "but when it's a question among the good people of Arcis, of exalting one of their equals, jealousy and envy will be stronger than patriotism."

"That is very simple," said the king's attorney, "but it's very true.—If you can muster fifty ministerial votes, you will probably find that you can control the election here," he added, glancing at Antonin Goulard.

"All we need to do is to set up another candidate of the same kind against Simon Giguet," said Vinet.

The sub-prefect could not restrain a gleam of satisfaction which escaped none of his three companions, with whom, by the way, he was on excellent terms. Bachelors all and all well-to-do, they had formed an alliance, without any sort of premeditation, as a protection against the tedium of life in the provinces. The three functionaries had already noticed the species of jealousy which Giguet aroused in Goulard, and which a word or two concerning their antecedents will explain. The son of a former huntsman in the employ of the Simeuse family, enriched by the purchase of national property, Antonin Goulard was, like Simon Giguet, a son of Arcis. Old Goulard, his father, left the abbey of Valpreux—a corruption of Val-des-Preux—to live in Arcis after his wife's death, and he sent his son Antonin to the imperial college, where Colonel Giguet had already placed his son Simon. The two compatriots, having been college-mates, studied law together in Paris, and their friendship extended to their youthful diversions. They promised to assist each other to make their way, as they embarked upon different careers; but fate willed that they should be rivals.

Notwithstanding his genuine advantages, notwithstanding the cross of the Legion of Honor which the Comte de Gondreville had obtained for Goulard in lieu of promotion, and which shone resplendent in

his buttonhole, the offer of his heart and his office had been unconditionally declined when Antonin addressed himself secretly to Madame Beauvisage, six months before the day on which this story begins. No step of that sort can be kept secret in the provinces. The king's attorney, Frédéric Marest, whose fortune, buttonhole decoration and official position were equal to those of Antonin Goulard, had, three years before, met with a similar refusal, based upon the difference in age. Thus the sub-prefect and the king's attorney confined themselves to the strictest requirements of courtesy in their intercourse with the Beauvisages, and laughed at them between themselves.

During their walk they had both divined and communicated to each other the secret of Simon Giguet's candidacy, for they had detected Madame Marion's hopes on the preceding day. Equally possessed by the feeling that animates *the gardener's dog*, they were both secretly desirous to prevent the advocate from marrying the rich heiress whose hand had been refused them.

"God grant that I can control the election," said the sub-prefect, "and that the Comte de Gondreville will have me appointed prefect, for I am no more anxious than you are to remain here although I am of Arcis!"

"You have a most excellent opportunity to get yourself chosen deputy, my chief," said Olivier Vinet to Marest. "Come to see my father, who will doubtless be at Provins in a few hours, and we

will ask him to have you made the ministerial candidate."

"Stay here!" said Antonin; "the ministry has views of its own concerning the election at Arcis."

"Pshaw! there are two ministries: the one that thinks about carrying elections and the one that thinks about profiting by them," said Vinet.

"Let us not increase Antonin's embarrassment," said Marest, winking at his deputy.

The four officials, having by this time reached a point on the square beyond the Avenue of Sighs, walked on as far as the *Mulet* inn, as they saw Poupart coming from Madame Marion's. At that moment the porte cochère of the house vomited forth the sixty-seven conspirators.

"So you have been to that house, have you?" said Antonin Goulard, pointing to the walls of the Marion garden which is on the Brienne road opposite the stables of the *Mulet*.

"I shan't go there again, Monsieur le sous-préfet," replied the innkeeper; "Monsieur Keller's son is dead and there's nothing more for me to do. God has undertaken to make the road clear."

"Well, Pigoult?" said Vinet, as the only discordant element at the Marion meeting approached.

"Well," replied the notary, upon whose brow the still undried perspiration bore witness to the efforts he had made, "Sinot came in and told us some news that brought all their minds together! With the exception of five dissidents—Poupart, my grandfather, Mollot, Sinot and myself,—they all swore, as

they did in the old days at the Tennis-Court, to use every effort to secure the triumph of Simon Giguet, of whom I have made a deadly enemy. Oh! we were well warmed up! However, I have induced the Giguets to launch invectives at the Gondrevilles, so the old count will be on my side. No later than to-morrow he shall know what the self-styled patriots of Arcis have said about him, about his corruption, his infamous acts, in order to throw off his protection, or, as they express it, his yoke."

"Are they unanimous?" said Olivier Vinet, smiling.

"To-day," replied Monsieur Martener.

"Oh!" cried Pigoult, "the general feeling among the electors is that a man from the province should be elected. Whom do you propose to set up in opposition to Simon Giguet, a man who has just spent two hours explaining the word *progress?*"

"We will go to see old Grévin!" cried the sub-prefect.

"He has no ambition," replied Pigoult; "but we must consult the Comte de Gondreville first of all. Look yonder," he added, "see how obsequiously Simon shows out that gilded blockhead of a Beauvisage!"

He pointed to the advocate, who held the mayor's arm and was whispering in his ear.

Beauvisage waved his hand to right and left, saluting the inhabitants, who gazed at him with the deference that provincials manifest for the richest man of their town.

"He lavishes attentions on him as father and mayor!"* said Vinet.

"Oh! he'll waste his time cosseting him," replied Pigoult, grasping the hidden meaning of the deputy-attorney's play upon words, "Cécile's hand isn't at her father's disposal or her mother's either."

"At whose, then, pray?"

"My former master's. If Simon should be elected Deputy from Arcis, he would not have taken the citadel."

Despite all that the sub-prefect and Frédéric Marest could say, Pigoult refused to explain that remark, which justly seemed to them big with events to come, and which disclosed more or less familiarity with the plans of the Beauvisage family.

All Arcis was in commotion, not only because of the fatal news that had stricken the Gondreville family, but also because of the momentous resolution formed at the Giguet mansion, where, at that moment, Madame Marion and her three servants were hard at work replacing everything in position, in order to be ready to receive their regular guests during the evening, as curiosity was likely to attract them in large numbers.

Champagne has the appearance of a poor province and is little else in fact. Its aspect is generally depressing; the country is perfectly flat. As you pass through the villages, and even the large towns, you see nothing but wretched structures of wood or

*"*Comme père et maire*" says Vinet, the sound being the same as if he had said: *comme père et mère*, as father and mother.

clay; the most luxurious are of brick. Stone is little used except in public buildings. Thus the château, the court house and the church are the only stone structures in Arcis. Nevertheless Champagne, or, if you prefer, the departments of the Aube, the Marne and Haute-Marne, in addition to their rich endowment of vineyards whose fame is world-wide, are full of flourishing industrial establishments. To say nothing of the manufactures of Rheims, almost all of the hosiery-making of France, an important industry, is carried on about Troyes. The country for ten leagues around is thickly peopled with mechanics whose trades you can discover through the open doors as you pass through the villages. These mechanics are employed by factors, and these deal with a speculator called a manufacturer. This latter sells to the establishments in Paris, often to simple retailers of caps and hosiery, who generally have signs over their doors bearing the words: *Hosiery Manufactory.* But not one of them manufactures a cap or a stocking or a sock. The hosiery comes from Champagne to a great extent, although there are in Paris some few mechanics who are rivals of the Champenois in that regard. This middleman between the producer and consumer is a plague-spot not confined to the hosiery industry: he is found in most industries and increases the price of merchandise by the amount of the profit demanded by him. To level these costly partitions which injure the sale of the products of industry, would be a noble undertaking which,

by virtue of its results, would rise to the height of a political achievement. In truth all manufacturing would gain by it, by establishing at home the profitable market so necessary to wage a successful industrial war with the foreigner; a war quite as murderous as that carried on with firearms. But the destruction of an abuse of this nature would not bring to modern philanthropists the glory and benefits to be derived from interminable polemics in favor of the hollow fads of negro emancipation and the penitentiary system; and so the intermediary trade of these *bankers in merchandise* will continue to be a burden to production and consumption for a long time to come.

In France, in this intelligent country, it seems that to simplify means to destroy. The Revolution of 1789 is still an object of fear. We can judge from the industrial energy exhibited by a province to which nature is ungenial, what progress agriculture would make there if capital would consent to fertilize the soil, which is no more ungrateful in Champagne than in Scotland, where capital has produced marvelous results. And on the day when agriculture shall have vanquished the unfertile portions of those departments, when manufacturing shall have sown a little capital upon the chalky soil of Champagne, its prosperity will increase threefold. At present the province knows not what luxury means, the homes contain only the bare necessaries of life; but English comfort will find its way into them, money will obtain that rapid

circulation which is half of wealth and which is already beginning to make itself felt in many sluggish districts of France. Writers, public officials, the Church from its pulpits, the press in its columns, all those to whom chance gives the power to exert influence upon the masses, should say again and again: to hoard money is a social crime! The unintelligent economy of the provinces arrests the life-blood of industry and impairs the national health. Thus the little town of Arcis, without free transit, without transportation facilities, apparently doomed to stand absolutely still, is, relatively speaking, a wealthy town and overflowing with capital slowly amassed in the manufacture of hosiery.

Monsieur Philéas Beauvisage was the Alexander or, if you prefer, the Attila of that state of affairs. This is how that honorable manufacturer had acquired his supremacy over cotton. The sole remaining child of the Beauvisage family, who were tenants of the magnificent farm of Bellache, belonging to the Gondreville estate, his parents made a sacrifice to save him from the conscription in 1811, by purchasing a substitute. Thereafter Madame Beauvisage, having become a widow, succeeded, by favor of the Comte de Gondreville's influence, in rescuing her only son from enrollment in the guards of honor, in 1813. At that time Philéas, being then twenty-one years old, had already been engaged for three years in the pacific occupation of making hosiery and caps. As the lease of Bellache was about to expire, the old woman declined to renew

it. She had sufficient employment for her old age in looking after the investment of her property. In order to avoid any possible trouble in her declining years, she insisted upon settling her husband's estate under the auspices of Maître Grévin, the notary of Arcis, although her son had not asked for an accounting; the result was that she owed him about a hundred and fifty thousand francs. The good woman did not sell her real estate, most of which came from the unfortunate Michu, the former steward of the Simeuse family; she handed her son the amount in cash, advising him to negotiate for the purchase of the establishment of his employer, Monsieur Pigoult, son of the old justice of the peace, whose affairs were in such a bad way that there was a suspicion, as we have already said, that his death was self-inflicted. Philéas Beauvisage, a prudent youth with great respect for his mother, soon arranged matters with his employer; and as he inherited from his parents the bump which phrenologists call the bump of *acquisitiveness*, his youthful ardor was all directed upon the business, which seemed to him magnificent, and which he determined to increase by speculation. The name Philéas, which may seem extraordinary, is one of the innumerable oddities due to the Revolution. Being retainers of the Simeuse family and consequently good Catholics, the Beauvisages desired of course that their child should be baptized. Abbé Goujet, the curé of Cinq-Cygne, being consulted by the farmers, advised them to take Philéas as

their son's patron saint, the Greek name being calculated to satisfy the municipality; for the boy was born at a time when children were inscribed on the civil registers under the strange names of the Republican calendar.

In 1814 the hosiery trade, which in ordinary times depends little on chance, was compelled to follow all the fluctuations in the price of cotton. The price of cotton depended on the triumph or defeat of the Emperor Napoléon, whose adversaries, the English generals, were saying in Spain: "The city is taken; put up the prices!" Pigoult, young Philéas's former employer, furnished his rural workmen with the raw material. When he sold his establishment to young Beauvisage, he owned a large stock of cotton purchased at the highest price, while quantities were being brought into the Empire from Lisbon at six sous the kilogram, by virtue of the Emperor's famous decree. The reaction in price following the introduction of that cotton caused the death of Pigoult, Achille's father, and was the beginning of Philéas's fortune; for he, far from losing his head like his employer, reduced the average price of his cotton by buying at a low figure twice the quantity laid in by his predecessor. That simple expedient enabled Philéas to increase his output threefold and to pose as a benefactor of his workmen, while he was able to place his product in Paris and throughout France at a profit, when the most fortunate of his rivals were selling at cost.

Early in 1814 Philéas had emptied his store-houses. The prospect of war on French territory, with the probability that its burden would be felt principally in Champagne, made him cautious; he did no manufacturing, and held himself in readiness for any emergency, with all his capital turned into gold. At that period the custom-house lines were broken down. Napoléon had found that he could not do without his thirty thousand customs officers for the struggle on French territory. Cotton, smuggled in through the innumerable gaps made in the hedge of our frontiers, found its way to all the markets of France. One cannot imagine how cunning and alert cotton was in those days, nor with what avidity the English seized upon a country where cotton stockings were worth six francs a pair and cambric shirts were a luxury! The wholesalers of the second class, the principal operatives, relying on Napoléon's genius, had bought the cotton that came from Spain. They manœuvred in the hope of imposing their own terms later on the dealers in Paris. Philéas took note of those facts. Then, when Champagne was ravaged by war, he took up a position between the French army and Paris. After every defeat he called upon the small manufacturers, who had buried their product in barrels, the silos of the hosiery trade; with his gold in his hand that Cossack of the knitting-machine purchased from village to village, below the cost of manufacture, casks full of merchandise which might from one day to another

become the booty of the enemy, whose feet required to be protected no less than their palates to be moistened. Under those unhappy circumstances, Philéas displayed an activity almost equal to the Emperor's. That general of the hosiery trade made the campaign of 1814 commercially with unknown heroism. From his station a league in the rear, while the general rode a league in advance, he triumphantly arranged a *corner* in caps and cotton stockings, while the Emperor won the laurel wreath of immortality in defeat. The genius was equal on both sides, although it was put forth in different spheres, and one thought of covering heads in as great number as the other caused them to fall. Being compelled to provide means of transportation in order to save his hogsheads of hosiery and caps, which he stored in a faubourg of Paris, Philéas frequently made requisitions of horses and vans, as if the safety of the Empire were at stake. Indeed, was not the majesty of commerce on a par with the majesty of Napoléon? Had not the English merchants, after taking all Europe into their pay, brought to terms the Colossus who threatened their shops?

When the Emperor abdicated at Fontainebleau, the triumphant Philéas had succeeded in gaining absolute control of the market. By skilful manœuvring he encouraged the depreciation of cotton, and doubled his fortune at a time when the luckiest manufacturers were those who disposed of their merchandise at only fifty per cent loss. He returned

to Arcis with three hundred thousand francs, half of which, invested in the public funds at sixty, produced fifteen thousand francs a year. One hundred thousand francs were employed to double the capital invested in his business. The balance was expended in building, decorating and furnishing a fine house on Place du Pont at Arcis.

On the return of the triumphant hosiery manufacturer, he naturally selected Maître Grévin for his confidential adviser. The notary had an only daughter, twenty years old and unmarried. Grévin's father-in-law, for forty years a physician at Arcis, was still alive. Grévin, who was a widower, was well acquainted with the extent of Mère Beauvisage's fortune. He thought highly of the energy and capability of a young man with sufficient nerve to make the campaign of 1814 as Philéas did. Séverine Grévin had her mother's fortune, sixty thousand francs, for her dowry. What could old Varlet be expected to leave Séverine? an equal amount at the most. Grévin was then fifty years of age; he was in fear of death; he could not see his way clear, under the Restoration, to find a husband to his taste for his daughter, for he was ambitious for her. Under the circumstances he was shrewd enough to lead Philéas to ask for his daughter's hand. Séverine Grévin, a well-bred young woman and comely, was esteemed one of the desirable *partis* of Arcis. Moreover, an alliance with the most intimate friend of the Comte de Gondreville, senator and peer of France, could bring naught but

honor to the son of a farmer of Gondreville; the widow Beauvisage would have made a sacrifice to bring it about; but, when she learned of her son's success, she abstained from bestowing a marriage portion upon him; a prudent reserve which was imitated by the notary. Thus was consummated the union of the son of a farmer, formerly so faithful to the Simeuses, with the daughter of one of their deadliest enemies. It was perhaps the only application ever made of Louis the Eighteenth's maxim: "Union and oblivion."

About the time of the second return of the Bourbons, Monsieur Varlet, the old physician, died at the age of seventy-six, leaving two hundred thousand francs in gold in his cellar, in addition to his real estate, valued at an equal sum. Thus, in 1816, Philéas and his wife possessed thirty thousand francs a year outside of the amount invested in the business; for Grévin wished to put his daughter's money in real estate, and Beauvisage made no objection. The amount received by Séverine Grévin as her grandfather's heir yielded barely fifteen thousand francs a year, notwithstanding the advantageous opportunities for investment which Grévin selected with care.

The first two years sufficed to convince Grévin and Madame Beauvisage of Philéas's utter imbecility. The keen glance of commercial greed had seemed to the old notary to be a manifestation of superior mental capacity, just as he had mistaken youth for vigor and good luck for business talent.

Although Philéas knew how to read and write and cipher, he had never read anything. His ignorance was so gross that it was impossible to have the most trivial conversation with him; he would pour out a deluge of commonplaces with an affable smile. But, in his capacity of farmer's son, he did not lack business common sense. A person might place before him a clear, precise, comprehensible proposition, but he never returned the compliment. Philéas was kind, even tender-hearted, and wept at the slightest suggestion of pathos. His kindly disposition caused him to feel the greatest respect for his wife, whose superiority aroused in him the most profound admiration. According to Philéas, Séverine, a woman with ideas of her own, knew everything. To be sure, her judgment was the more unerring because she consulted her father on all occasions. And then she possessed great decision of character which tended to make her absolute mistress in her own house. As soon as that result was secured, the old notary had less regret, seeing that his daughter was happy by virtue of a domination which always satisfies women of that character;—but the wife remained!

This, so the story goes, is what the wife found:

In the reaction of 1815, there was sent to Arcis as sub-prefect a Vicomte de Chargebœuf, of the poorer branch, appointed through the influence of the Marquis de Cinq-Cygne, with whose family he was connected. That young man held the office of sub-prefect for five years. The lovely Madame

Beauvisage was not, it was said, entirely unconnected with the motives of the viscount's incumbency of that sub-prefecture, which was infinitely too long for his promotion. Nevertheless, let us hasten to say that the gossip was not accompanied by any of the scandalous incidents which, in the provinces, betray passions so difficult of concealment from the Arguses of a small town. If Séverine loved the Vicomte de Chargebœuf, if her love was returned, it was all straightforward and honorable, said the friends of the Grévins and Marions. This double coterie imposed its opinion on the whole arrondissement; but the Marions and the Grévins had no influence over the royalists, and the royalists maintained that the sub-prefect was very fortunate. As soon as the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne heard what was being said about her kinsman at the châteaux, she summoned him to Cinq-Cygne; and such was her horror of all those who were connected nearly or distantly with the actors in the judicial drama so fatal to her family, that she enjoined upon the viscount to change his place of residence. She secured her cousin's appointment to the sub-prefecture of Sancerre, promising him a prefecture. Some shrewd observers claimed that the viscount had simulated his passion in order to become prefect, for he was well aware of the marchioness's hatred of the name of Grévin. Others noticed coincidences between the Vicomte de Chargebœuf's appearances at Paris and Madame Beauvisage's trips to the capital, which were made

upon the most frivolous pretexts. An impartial historian would be sadly embarrassed to form an opinion concerning facts shrouded in the mysteries of private life. A single circumstance seemed to justify the evil-speaking. Cécile-Renée Beauvisage was born in 1820, about the time when Monsieur de Chargebœuf left the sub-prefecture, and among the names borne by the fortunate sub-prefect was the name of René. That name was suggested by the Comte de Gondreville, Cécile's godfather. If the mother had remonstrated against her daughter's receiving the name, she would thereby in some sort have confirmed the current suspicions. As the world is always determined to be right, the incident was considered an exhibition of malice on the part of the old peer of France. Madame Keller, who was the count's daughter, and whose name was Cécile, was the godmother. As for the personal appearance of Cécile-Renée Beauvisage, it was a striking fact that, while she bore no resemblance at all to her father or mother, she eventually became the living image of the viscount, whose aristocratic manners she also exhibited. That twofold resemblance, moral and physical, could never be discovered by the people of Arcis, where the viscount was no more seen. Séverine made Philéas happy in his way. He loved good cheer and the comforts of life; she provided the most exquisite wines for him, a table worthy of a bishop and directed by the best cook in the department; but all without display, for she kept her house on the level of the bourgeois homes

of Arcis. It was a common remark in the town that you should dine with Madame Beauvisage and pass the evening at Madame Marion's.

The preponderance which the Restoration gave to the Cinq-Cygne family in the arrondissement of Arcis had naturally drawn tighter the bonds between all the families in the province who were connected with the criminal prosecution instituted apropos of the abduction of Gondreville. The Marions, the Grévins and the Giguets were the more closely united because the triumph of their opinions,—*constitutional* so-called,—at the elections depended upon perfect harmony between them. Séverine designedly caused Beauvisage to go on with the manufacture of hosiery, which any other than he would have given up; she sent him to Paris or into the country on business. Thus, up to 1830, Philéas, making good use of his bump of acquisitiveness, gained every year a sum equal to his yearly expenses over and above the interest on his invested funds, carrying on his trade *in slippers*, to employ a colloquial expression. The various interests and investments of Monsieur and Madame Beauvisage, capitalized within fifteen years by the exertions of Monsieur Grévin, amounted therefore in 1830 to some five hundred thousand francs. Such was, in fact, at that time the amount of Cécile's dowry, which the old notary caused to be invested in three per cents at fifty, producing thirty thousand francs a year. Thus there was little danger that common report would overestimate the fortune of

the Beauvisages, which was reckoned at eighty thousand francs a year.

In 1830 they sold their hosiery business to Jean Violette, one of their agents, grandson of one of the principal witnesses for the prosecution in the Simeuse affair, and they then invested the proceeds of the sale, reckoned at three hundred thousand francs; but Monsieur and Madame Beauvisage had in prospect the inheritances of old Grévin and of old farmer Beauvisage's wife, each of whom was supposed to have between fifteen and twenty thousand francs a year. The great provincial fortunes are the product of time multiplied by economy. Thirty years of old age are always a good investment. After giving Cécile-Renée a dowry of fifty thousand francs a year, Monsieur and Madame Beauvisage would still have for themselves these two inheritances, amounting to thirty thousand a year, and their house at Arcis. If the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne were dead, Cécile could assuredly marry the young marquis; but that lady's excellent health—she was still young and almost beautiful at sixty—destroyed that hope, assuming that it had ever entered the hearts of Grévin and his daughter, as some people maintained, being amazed at the ill-success of suitors as eligible as the sub-prefect and the king's attorney.

The Beauvisage house, one of the finest in Arcis, is situated on the Place du Pont, on the line of Rue Vide-Bourse, at the corner of Rue du Pont, which runs up to the church square.

Although it has neither courtyard nor garden, like many provincial houses, it is quite effective notwithstanding the execrable taste of the ornamentation. The door, which is low although it has two wings, opens on the square. The windows of the ground floor command a view of the *Poste* inn on the street side, and, on the side of the square, of the picturesque scenery of the Aube, which begins to be navigable below the bridge. Above the bridge is another little square, on which Monsieur Grévin lives and where the Sézanne road begins. Upon the street as well as upon the square, the Beauvisage house, being neatly painted white, has the effect of being built of stone. The height of the blinds, the exterior decoration of the windows all combine to give the house a certain distinction, which is heightened by the generally wretched appearance of the houses of Arcis, almost all of which are built of wood and covered with a coat of plaster intended to imitate the solidity of stone. Nevertheless these houses do not lack a certain artlessness from the very fact that each architect and each bourgeois has done his best to solve the problem presented by that method of building. On each of the squares which lie at each end of the bridge, may be seen a type of these Champenois edifices. In the centre of the row of houses at the left of the Beauvisage house, on the square, is the modest establishment of Jean Violette, painted wine-color with green trimmings. Violette was, as we have said, the grandson of the famous farmer of Grouage, one of the principal

witnesses in the affair of the abduction of the senator, and it was he to whom Beauvisage, is 1830, had sold his business, and the good-will thereof, and to whom, people said, he was in the habit of lending money.

The bridge of Arcis is built of wood. About a hundred metres above the bridge, the river is spanned by another bridge on which stands a water-mill with several wheels. The space between the public bridge and this private bridge forms a great basin on whose shores are a number of large houses. Through an open space and over the roofs, one can see the eminence upon which are located the château of Arcis, its gardens, its park, its enclosing walls and its trees, which overlook the upper waters of the Aube and the sterile fields on the left bank. The plashing of the Aube as it flows over the dam above the canal of the mills, the music of the wheels against which the water is lashed into foam and falls back into the basin, forming miniature cascades there, impart animation to Rue du Pont and form a striking contrast to the tranquillity of the river below the bridge between the garden of Monsieur Grévin, whose house stands at the corner of the bridge on the left bank, and the harbor on the right bank, where the vessels discharge their freights in front of a row of poor but not unpicturesque buildings. The Aube winds away in the distance among sparse or thickly-growing trees, large and small, of variegated foliage, according to the whims of the riparian proprietors. The exterior of the houses is so varied that a traveler would find there

specimens of the architecture of all lands. For instance, on the northern bank of the basin, in whose waters ducks paddle and splash, there is a quasi-southern house, the roof of which bends beneath the weight of the leaden gutters commonly used in Italy; at one side is a small garden supported by a corner of the quay, in which are vines, a trellis and two or three trees. It reminds one somewhat of Rome, where certain houses on the bank of the Tiber present a similar aspect. Opposite, on the other shore, is a large house with an overhanging roof and covered galleries that resemble those on Swiss houses. To make the illusion complete, between that building and the mill-dam you see a broad level tract with poplars here and there, through which runs a narrow sandy road; and lastly the château and its dependencies, which seem the more imposing because they are surrounded by less substantial structures, represent the splendor of the French aristocracy.

Although the squares at both ends of the bridge are crossed by the Sézanne road, a vile thoroughfare in wretched condition, and although they are the most animated portions of the town, for the court of the justice of the peace and the municipal offices of Arcis are situated on Rue Vide-Bourse, a Parisian would consider the place exceedingly countrified and deserted. The whole locality is so primitive that there is actually a common farm-pump on the Place du Pont opposite the *Poste* inn! For a half-century it was possible to admire one almost its

counterpart in the superb courtyard of the Louvre! Nothing can describe provincial life more eloquently than the profound silence in which the little town is buried and which prevails even in its busiest spot. One can readily imagine the excitement caused by the presence of a stranger, even though he should pass but half a day there, how eagerly faces peer from every window to look at him, and in what a state of mutual espionage the inhabitants live! Life becomes so like life in a convent that with the exception of Sundays and holidays a stranger will not meet a single person on the boulevards or the Avenue of Sighs, or even in the streets.

Everyone will understand now why the ground floor of the Beauvisage house was on a level with the street and the square. The square served as a courtyard. Standing at his window, the ex-cap-maker could embrace the church square, the squares at each end of the bridge and the Sézanne road, all in the same line. He could see the carriers and travelers arrive at the *Poste* inn, and on business days he could watch the bustle at the mayor's office and the justice's court. So Beauvisage would not have exchanged his house for the château, despite its seignioral aspect, its hewn stone and its superb situation.

On entering the Beauvisage house, you found in front of you a peristyle with a staircase at the rear. At the right was a large salon, with two windows looking on the square, and at the left a beautiful dining-room whose windows looked on the street. The living rooms were on the first floor.

Despite the wealth of the Beauvisages, their establishment consisted of a cook and a lady's maid, the latter a peasant woman who spent much more time in washing and ironing and scrubbing than in dressing Madame and Mademoiselle Beauvisage, who were accustomed to wait upon each other to pass the time. Since the sale of the hosiery establishment, Philéas's horse and cabriolet, which were kept at the *Poste* inn, had been suppressed and sold.

*

Just as Philéas returned home, his wife, who had been informed of the decision of the Giguet meeting, was putting on her boots and her shawl to go to her father's house; for she foresaw that Madame Marion would come that evening to make overtures to her relative to the bestowal of Cécile's hand upon Simon. After informing his wife of Charles Keller's death, he innocently asked for her opinion with a "What do you say to that, my dear?" which well portrayed his habit of respecting Séverine's opinion in everything. Then he seated himself in an easy-chair and awaited a reply.

In 1839 Madame Beauvisage, then about forty-four years of age, was so well preserved that she might have acted as understudy to Mademoiselle Mars. By recalling the most charming Célimène that the Théâtre-Français has ever seen, one can form an accurate idea of Séverine Grévin's appearance. There were the same fullness of figure, the same beautiful face, the same sharply-defined outlines; but the hosier's wife was so short of stature that she lacked the noble grace, the coquetry *à la* Sévigné by reason of which the great actress is enshrined in the memory of the men who saw the Empire and the Restoration. Provincial life and the negligence in the matter of dress to which Séverine had become somewhat addicted in the

past ten years imparted an indefinable suggestion of commonness to those lovely features, and a decided tendency to corpulence had ruined that figure, which was so superb during the first twelve years of her married life. But those imperfections were redeemed by a queenly glance, haughty and imperious, and by a characteristic carriage of the head, abounding in pride. Her hair, still jet black and long and abundant, was arranged in a braid on top of her head and gave her a youthful air. Her breast and shoulders were as white as snow, but so rounded and full as to impede the free movement of the neck, which had become too short. At the end of her large plump arm was a pretty, but over-fat little hand. She was, in fact, so over-burdened with life and health that the flesh, although an attempt was made to confine it, formed a slight ridge above her shoes. Earrings worth three thousand francs each, hung from her ears. She wore a lace cap with red ribbons, a dress in redingote style, of muslin with alternate pink and gray stripes and a green border, which was cut away at the bottom to show a petticoat trimmed with Valenciennes, and a green cashmere shawl with palm-leaves, the ends of which dragged on the floor. Her feet seemed ill at ease in high shoes of bronzed kid.

"You're not so hungry," she said, looking down at Beauvisage, "that you can't wait half an hour. My father has finished his dinner and I can't eat in peace until I know what he thinks, and if we ought to go to Gondreville."

"Go, go, my dear; I will wait for you," said the ex-hosier.

"*Mon Dieu!* shall I never break you of talking to me in that familiar way?" she said with a significant shrug of the shoulders.

"I have never done it before anybody since 1817," replied Philéas.

"You do it constantly before the servants and before your daughter."

"As you please, Séverine," rejoined Beauvisage in a melancholy tone.

"Above all things don't say a word to Cécile about this decision of the electors," added Madame Beauvisage, as she looked herself over in the mirror and arranged her shawl.

"Do you want me to go to your father's with you?" inquired Philéas.

"No, stay with Cécile. By the way, isn't Jean Violette to pay you the balance of his purchase money to-day? He is coming to bring you his twenty thousand francs. Three times he has put us off for three months; don't give him any more time, and if he's not ready to pay, carry his note to Courtet, the bailiff; do everything in proper form and take out judgment. Achille Pigoult will tell you what to do to get the money. That Violette is a worthy grandson of his grandfather! I believe he is quite capable of enriching himself by a failure; he knows neither faith nor law."

"He is very intelligent," said Beauvisage.

"You sold him for thirty thousand francs an

establishment and a clientèle that were certainly worth fifty thousand, and in eight years he has paid only ten thousand."

"I never sued anybody," said Beauvisage, "and I prefer to lose my money rather than harass a poor man—"

"A man who laughs at you."

Beauvisage held his peace. As he could think of no reply to that cruel observation, he stared at the boards that formed the floor of the salon.

It may be that the progressive deterioration of Beauvisage's intelligence and will-power can be explained by the abuse of sleep. For twenty years he had retired at eight o'clock and risen at eight, sleeping his twelve hours without ever waking in the night; and if by chance that momentous event did occur, it was in his view a most extraordinary thing: he would talk about it all day. He passed about an hour at his toilet, for his wife had accustomed him not to appear in her presence at breakfast until he was washed and shaven and dressed. When he was in business he went away immediately after breakfast and did not return until dinner. Since 1832 he had substituted for his walk to his place of business a visit to his father-in-law and a promenade, or ceremonious calls. In all weathers he wore boots, blue trousers, a white waistcoat and a blue coat, a costume required by his wife. His linen was of a whiteness and fineness that were the more noticeable because Séverine compelled him to change every day. This extreme care of his person,

so rarely found in the provinces, contributed to increase the high consideration in which he was held in Arcis, as a man of fashion is held in Paris. So it was that that grave and dignified dealer in cotton caps seemed, so far as external appearances were concerned, to be an important personage; for his wife was clever enough never to have said a word tending to admit the public of Arcis into the secret of her disappointment and the utter nullity of her husband, who, thanks to his smiles, his obsequious remarks and his rich attire, was esteemed one of the most noteworthy of men. People said that Séverine was so jealous of him that she would not allow him to go to an evening party, while Philéas was bruising the roses and lilies of his complexion with the deadening weight of peaceful slumber. Beauvisage, who lived in accordance with his tastes, coddled by his wife, well served by his two servants and cajoled by his daughter, called himself the happiest man in Arcis, and so he was. Séverine's feeling for that insignificant creature was not altogether devoid of the protecting compassion of a mother for her children. She disguised the harshness of the words she was compelled to use to him beneath a jesting manner. No household could be more peaceful, and Philéas's aversion for social functions, where he fell asleep, where he could not play cards, for he did not know any game, had made Séverine the absolute mistress of her evenings.

Cécile's appearance put an end to Philéas's embarrassment.

"How lovely you are!" he cried.

Madame Beauvisage turned sharply and bestowed upon her daughter a piercing glance that made her blush.

"Well, Cécile, who told you to dress like that?" her mother asked.

"Aren't we going to Madame Marion's this evening? I put on my new dress to see how it looks."

"Cécile! Cécile! why do you try to deceive your mother?" said Séverine. "That isn't right, I am not pleased with you, you are trying to conceal some thought from me."

"Why, what has she done?" queried Beauvisage, delighted to see his daughter so sprucely attired.

"What has she done? I will let her know!" said Madame Beauvisage, shaking her finger threateningly at her only daughter.

Cécile threw her arms around her mother's neck, kissed her, and coaxed her,—a way that an only daughter has of putting herself in the right.

Cécile Beauvisage, a young lady of nineteen, had arrayed herself in a gray silk dress, trimmed with braid of a deeper gray, and made in the style of a coat in front. The high-necked, pleated waist, with its buttons and *jockeys*, ended in a point in front and was laced behind like corsets. It thus outlined perfectly the back and hips and bust. The skirt, trimmed with three rows of fringe, fell in graceful folds, and betrayed by its style and cut the cunning of a Parisian dressmaker. A pretty fichu, trimmed with lace, fell over the front of the waist.

Around her neck the heiress wore a pink silk-handkerchief tied in a tasteful knot, and on her head a straw hat adorned with a simple moss rose. Her hands were encased in black thread mitts; and her feet in high shoes of bronzed kid; in fine, except for her somewhat festive appearance, that figure, worthy of a fashion-plate in a *journal des modes*, would have enchanted Cécile's father and mother. Cécile was very well-built, too, of medium height and perfectly proportioned. She had arranged her chestnut hair, in accordance with the fashion of 1839, in two broad plaits which framed her face and were brought together at the back of the head. Her face was ruddy with health, of a patrician cast, and noticeable by reason of the aristocratic air which she inherited neither from her father nor her mother. Her light-brown eyes were entirely lacking in the gentle, calm, almost melancholy expression natural to young girls. Vivacious, full of life and in robust health, Cécile marred all the romance there was in her face by a sort of bourgeois downrightness and by the freedom of manners characteristic of spoiled children. Nevertheless, a husband capable of making over her education and of expunging therefrom the traces of provincial life, might still have fashioned that block into a charming woman. Indeed the pride that Séverine had implanted in her daughter had outweighed the effects of her maternal affection. Madame Beauvisage had had the courage to bring up her daughter on an excellent system; she had forced herself to adopt a feigned severity of

treatment which enabled her to compel obedience and to repress the very slight tendency to evil that existed in that heart. The mother and the daughter were inseparable; and so Cécile had—and those qualities are more rarely found in young girls than is generally supposed—genuine, absolute and perfect purity of thought, freshness of heart and innocence.

"Your costume sets me to thinking," said Madame Beauvisage; "can it be that Simon Giguet said anything to you yesterday that you haven't told me?"

"Even if he did," said Philéas, "a man who is about to receive the mandate of his fellow-citizens—"

"Dear mamma," said Cécile in her mother's ear, "he bores me; but he is the only one left for me in Arcis."

"You are not far from right; but wait till your grandfather has spoken," said Madame Beauvisage, kissing her daughter, whose reply indicated great good sense, although it revealed a breach in her innocence, made by the thought of marriage.

Grévin's house, which is situated on the right bank of the Aube and forms the corner of the little square above the bridge, is one of the oldest in Arcis. It is built of wood and the interstices in the thin walls are filled with pebbles; but it is covered with a coat of mortar, smoothed with the trowel and painted gray. Despite that coquettish decoration, it has none the less the appearance of a house built of cards. The garden, which lies along the river bank, is protected by a terraced wall crowned

with flower pots. This humble dwelling, at whose windows are solid shutters painted gray like the walls, is furnished in harmony with the simplicity of the exterior. As you enter a small paved court-yard, you see the green trellises which separate it from the garden. On the ground floor is the former office, converted into a salon, with windows looking on the river and the square; it is furnished with old-fashioned furniture covered with green Utrecht velvet very badly worn. The retired notary's former study has become the dining-room. There everything indicates a profoundly philosophical old man, leading one of the lives that flow on as a little brook flows through green fields, and that the harlequins of political life envy at last when their minds are disillusioned concerning social grandeurs, or weary of struggling madly against the onward march of the human race.

While Séverine is crossing the bridge, watching the house to see if her father has finished his dinner, it will be well to cast a glance at the personal appearance, the life and the opinions of that old man, who was commended to the respect of the whole province by the friendship of Comte Malin de Gondreville. This is the simple, artless history of the notary, who was for a long while the only notary in Arcis, so to speak.—

In 1787 two young men went from Arcis to Paris, with letters of recommendation to an advocate before the Council named Danton. That illustrious patriot was a native of Arcis. His house can still

be seen and the family is still in existence there. That fact will perhaps explain the influence exerted by the Revolution upon that corner of Champagne. Danton found places for his compatriots in the office of the king's attorney at the Châtelet, who became so famous through his lawsuit with Comte Morton de Chabrillant concerning his box at the first performance of *Le Mariage de Figaro*, and whose quarrel was espoused by the Parliament, that body deeming itself insulted in the person of its attorney. One of the young men was named Malin, the other Grévin, and both were only sons. Malin's father was the owner of the house in which Grévin lives to-day. They entertained for each other a reciprocal, steadfast regard. Malin, a shrewd youth of profound and ambitious mind, had the gift of speech. Grévin, honest and laborious, devoted himself to admiration of Malin as his calling. They returned to their province when the Revolution broke out, one to be an advocate at Troyes, the other to be a notary at Arcis. Grévin, who was Malin's obsequious slave, procured his election as a member of the Convention. Malin procured Grévin's appointment as procureur-syndic of Arcis. Malin was an obscure figure in the Convention until the 9th Thermidor, standing always with the more powerful faction and helping to crush the weaker; but Tallien convinced him of the necessity of striking down Robespierre. Malin distinguished himself in that terrible struggle, courage came to him most opportunely. With that crisis began this man's political

career, as one of the heroes of the lower sphere: he deserted the party of Thermidorians for the Clichyans, and was chosen a member of the Council of Ancients. Having become the friend of Talleyrand and Fouché, conspiring with them against Bonaparte, he became like them one of Bonaparte's warmest partisans after Marengo. Appointed tribune, he was among the first to enter the Council of State, was one of the compilers of the Code, and was one of the first men promoted to be senator under the name of Comte de Gondreville.

Such was the political side of that life; let us now glance at its financial side.

Grévin was the most active and most adroit instrument of the Comte de Gondreville's fortune in the arrondissement of Arcis. The Gondreville estate belonged to the Simeuses, a fine old provincial family, decimated by the scaffold, whose heirs, two young men, were serving in the Prince de Condé's army. That estate, being sold as the property of the nation, was purchased by Malin, in the name of Monsieur Marion, by the skilful management of Grévin. Grévin purchased for his friend the best part of all the ecclesiastical property sold by the Republic in the department of the Aube. Malin sent him the funds necessary for these purchases, nor did he forget his man of business. When the Directory came into power, a period at which Malin was very prominent in the counsels of this Republic, the sales were completed in Malin's name. Grévin was a notary, Malin a Councilor of State. Grévin

was Mayor of Arcis, Malin was senator and Comte de Gondreville. Malin married the daughter of a millionaire army contractor, Grévin married the only daughter of Goodman Varlet, the leading physician of Arcis. The Comte de Gondreville had three hundred thousand francs a year, a mansion at Paris and the magnificent château de Gondreville; he married one of his daughters to one of the Kellers, bankers in Paris, the other to the Maréchal Duc de Carigliano. Grévin, with an income of fifteen thousand francs, owns the house in which he is finishing out his tranquil life, spending little; and he has continued to act as man of business for his friend, who sold him the house for six thousand francs. The Comte de Gondreville is eighty years old and Grévin seventy-six. The peer of France walks in his park, the ex-notary in Malin's father's garden: both enveloped in swanskin and heaping louis upon louis. No cloud has ever darkened that friendship of sixty years. The notary has always obeyed the member of Convention, the Councilor of State, the senator, the peer of France. After the Revolution of July, Malin said to Grévin one day as he was driving through Arcis:

"Do you want the Cross?"

"What should I do with it?" was Grévin's reply.

Neither had ever failed the other; they had always told each other everything and advised each other, the one without jealousy, the other without arrogance or offensive assumption of superiority. Malin had always been obliged to make allowances

for Grévin, for Grévin's whole pride was the Comte de Gondreville. Grévin was as much Comte de Gondreville as that nobleman himself was. Since the Revolution of July, however, as Grévin, conscious that he was growing old, had ceased to manage the count's property, and the count, enfeebled by age and his active participation in politics, had determined to lead a tranquil life thenceforth, the two old men, sure of each other's loyalty, but having now less need of each other, seldom met. On his way to his estate, and when he was returning to Paris, the count always called upon Grévin, who paid but one or two visits to the count during his stay at Gondreville. There was no tie between their children. Neither Madame Keller nor the Duchesse de Carigliano had ever had the slightest intimacy with Mademoiselle Grévin, either before or after her marriage to Beauvisage the manufacturer of hosiery. Their disdain, whether involuntary or designed, surprised Séverine very much. Grévin, who was Mayor of Arcis under the Empire and was ready to be of service to everyone, had, during his incumbency of the office, smoothed away and obviated many difficulties. His outspokenness, his good-humor and his uprightness won him the esteem and affection of the whole arrondissement; moreover everyone respected in him the dispenser of the favor, the power and the influence of the Comte de Gondreville.

Nevertheless, since the notary's activity and his participation in public and private affairs had ceased

—that is to say, since eight years prior to the time of which we write—he had been almost forgotten in Arcis, where everyone expected, from day to day, to hear of his death. Like his friend Malin, Grévin seemed to vegetate rather than to live; he never showed himself in public, he worked in his garden, trimmed his trees, watched the progress of his vegetables and his buds; and, like all old men, he tried to anticipate the sensations of a dead man. The septuagenarian's life was absolutely regular. Rising at dawn and retiring before nine o'clock, like his friend Colonel Giguet, he led the frugal life of a miser and drank little wine, but that little was of exquisite quality. He drank coffee, but never liqueurs, and the only exercise he took was that involved in his gardening. He wore the same clothes in all weathers: heavy oiled shoes, milled stockings, gray swanskin trousers with knee-buckles, but no suspenders, an ample waistcoat of light sky-blue broadcloth with horn buttons, and a frockcoat of gray swanskin like the trousers; on his head he wore a little round otter cap and kept it on in the house. In summer the cap was replaced by a sort of skull-cap of black velvet, and the swanskin coat by one of iron-gray cloth. He was five feet four inches tall; he had the customary corpulence of old men in good health, which had a tendency to increase the sluggishness of his gait, naturally somewhat slow, like that of all those whose lives are passed in offices.

At daybreak the good man dressed himself with

the most scrupulous attention to the smallest details of his toilet; he shaved himself, then he made the circuit of his garden, observed the weather, consulted his barometer and opened the shutters of his salon. Then he hoed and weeded and killed caterpillars, always finding something to do before breakfast. After breakfast, he sat quietly in the house until two o'clock, to allow his food to digest, thinking of heaven knows what. His granddaughter almost always came to see him between two o'clock and five, escorted by a servant, and sometimes accompanied by her mother. On certain days this mechanical life was interrupted: there were rents to receive, in money and in produce, the latter being sold at once. But that little disturbance occurred only on market days, once a month. What became of the money? No one, not even Séverine or Cécile knew; Grévin possessed a more than ecclesiastical secretiveness. But all the old man's sentiments had finally become concentrated upon his daughter and grandchild, he loved them more dearly than his money.

This scrupulously neat, round-faced septuagenarian, with the bald head, blue eyes and fringe of white hair, had a strain of arbitrariness in his character like all those to whom men and things have always yielded. His only defect—which was extremely well concealed, by the way, for he had never had occasion to display it—was a persistent, inveterate rancor, a sensitiveness which Malin had never wounded. If Grévin had always done the

Comte de Gondreville's bidding, he had always found him grateful; Malin had never humiliated nor irritated his friend, whom he knew from top to toe. The two friends still retained the familiar mode of address of their youth, and exchanged the same affectionate grasp of the hand. The senator had never caused Grévin to feel the difference in their respective positions; he always anticipated the wishes of his childhood's friend, and always offered him everything, knowing that he would content himself with very little.

Grévin was an enthusiastic admirer of classical literature, a purist, an excellent administrator, and he possessed a vast store of useful knowledge upon matters of legislation; he had done work for Malin which laid the foundation of the renown of that compiler of codes, in the Council of State. Séverine was very fond of her father; she and her daughter would allow no one else to make his linen; they knitted stockings for him for the winter, they took the most minute precautions concerning his health, and Grévin knew that no selfish thought entered into their affection for him: the probable million that they would inherit from him would not dry their tears; old men are highly appreciative of disinterested affection. Before leaving the old gentleman's house, Madame Beauvisage and Cécile invariably discussed the subject of his next day's dinner, and they sent him the choicest dainties in the market.

Madame Beauvisage had always desired her

father to present her at the château de Gondreville and enable her to become intimate with the count's daughters, but the sagacious old man had explained to her again and again how difficult it would be to maintain continuous relations with the Duchesse de Carigliano, who lived in Paris and rarely came to Gondreville, or with the brilliant Madame Keller, when one conducted a hosiery factory at Arcis.

"Your life is ended," he said to his daughter; "let all your enjoyment in future be centred in Cécile, who will certainly be rich enough to enable you, when you abandon trade, to lead the large and brilliant life which is your due. Select a son-in-law who has ambition and resources, and some day you will be able to go to Paris and leave that silly fool Beauvisage behind. If I live long enough to have a grandson-in-law, I will pilot you over the sea of political interests as I piloted Malin, and you will attain a position equal to the Kellers'."

Those few words, spoken before the Revolution of 1830 and a year after the old notary's retirement, explain his vegetative attitude. Grévin wished to live, he was ambitious to start his daughter, his granddaughter and his great-grandchildren on the road to grandeur. His ambition extended to the third generation. When he spoke thus the old man was dreaming of marrying Cécile to Charles Keller; so that now he was weeping over his disappointed hopes, he knew not what course to pursue. Having no connections in Parisian society,

and unable to think of any other husband for Cécile in the department of the Aube than the young Marquis de Cinq-Cygne, he asked himself whether he would be able to overcome, by the power of gold, the obstacles erected by the Revolution of July between the royalists who were faithful to their principles and their conquerors. It seemed to him that his granddaughter's happiness would be so endangered if she were delivered over to the tender mercies of the haughty Marquise de Cinq-Cygne, that he decided to place his trust in the old man's friend, time. He hoped that his mortal enemy, the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne, would die, and he believed that, in that case, he could win over her son, the young marquis, by making use of his grandfather, old D'Hauteserre, who was then living at Cinq-Cygne, and whom he knew to be accessible to the temptations of avarice. If that plan should come to nothing before Cécile Beauvisage was twenty-two years of age, then Grévin, despairing of its success, would consult his friend Gondreville, who would select for him in Paris, among the dukes of the Empire, a husband after his own heart and ambition.

Séverine found her father seated on a wooden bench at one end of his terrace, under a flowering lilac, and taking his coffee, for it was half-past five. She saw, by the grief depicted upon her father's face, that he had heard the news. In fact the old peer of France had just sent a servant to his friend, begging him to come to see him. Hitherto Grévin

had refrained from encouraging his daughter's ambition; but at that moment, amid the contradictory reflections that were jostling one another in his sad reverie, his secret escaped him.

"My dear child," he said, "I had formed the noblest and grandest projects for your future. Death has defeated them all. Cécile would have been Vicomtesse Keller, for Charles would have been chosen Deputy from Arcis, through my efforts, and some day he would have succeeded to his father's peerage. Neither Gondreville nor his daughter Madame Keller would have refused the sixty thousand francs a year of Cécile's dowry, especially with the prospect of a hundred thousand more which you will have some day. You would have lived in Paris with your daughter, and would have played your rôle of mother-in-law in the highest government circles."

Madame Beauvisage made a gesture of satisfaction.

"But we are all stricken by the bullet that deprives us of that charming young man who had already won the friendship of the Prince Royal.—Now this Simon Giguet, who is forcing himself forward on the political stage, is an idiot, an idiot of the worst sort, for he believes that he's an eagle.—You are too intimate with the Giguets and Madame Marion not to make your refusal as courteous as possible, but you must refuse."

"We are, as always, of the same opinion, father."

"All this makes it necessary for me to see my

old Malin, in the first place to comfort him and secondly to consult with him. You and Cécile would be very unhappy with an old family of Faubourg Saint-Germain, you would be made to feel your humble origin in a thousand ways; we must try to find some duke of Bonaparte's making, who is ruined: we shall be able in that way to obtain a fine title for Cécile, and we will marry her with a provision that she is to enjoy her separate property. You can say that I have disposed of Cécile's hand and that will cut off all such impertinent suits as Antonin Goulard's. Little Vinet will not fail to offer himself; he would be preferable to all the swains who will get scent of the dowry.—He has talent and cunning, and he is connected with the Chargebœufs through his mother; but he has too strong a character not to rule his wife, and he is young enough to make her love him: you would die between those two sentiments, for I know you by heart, my child!"

"I shall be well coddled to-night at the Marions," said Séverine.

"Well, my child," rejoined Grévin, "send Madame Marion to me, I will talk to her!"

"I knew very well, father, that you would think of our future, but I had no idea that it was to be so brilliant," said Madame Beauvisage, taking her father's hands and kissing them.

"I have thought so deeply about it," replied Grévin, "that in 1831 I bought a house in Paris that you know, the Beauséant mansion—"

Madame Beauvisage started in surprise upon learning that well-kept secret, but she did not interrupt her father.

"That will be my wedding present," he said. "In 1832 I let it for seven years to some English people, for twenty-four thousand francs a year; a very pretty little investment, for it cost me only three hundred and twenty-five thousand, and I have got nearly two hundred thousand back. The lease expires on the 15th of July of this year."

Séverine kissed her father on the forehead and both cheeks. This last revelation so enlarged the horizon of her future that she had something like an attack of vertigo.

"If father takes my advice he will give only the legal title to that estate to his grandchildren and will allow me the beneficial use of it," she said to herself as she recrossed the bridge; "I don't choose that my daughter and son-in-law shall turn me out of their house; they must live in my house!"

At dessert, when the two maidservants were at table in the kitchen and Madame Beauvisage was certain of not being overheard, she deemed it necessary to read Cécile a little lecture.

"Behave like a well-bred young lady this evening, my daughter," she said; "and from this time adopt an air of dignity, do not talk on frivolous subjects, do not walk alone with Monsieur Giguet nor with Monsieur Olivier Vinet, nor with the sub-prefect, nor with Monsieur Martener, nor with anybody else, not even Achille Pigoult. You shall not marry any

one of the young men of Arcis or of the department either. You are destined to make your mark in Paris. So you shall have lovely dresses every day, in order to accustom you to luxury. We will try to bribe one of the young Duchesse de Maufrigneuse's maids: in that way we can find out where the Princesse de Cadignan and the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne buy their dresses. Oh! I don't propose that we shall have the slightest trace of provincialism. You must study the piano three hours a day; I will have Monsieur Moïse come from Troyes every day, until I hear of some teacher that I can send for from Paris. We must make you perfect in all your accomplishments, for you only have a year longer at most to remain unmarried. Now you are warned, I will see how you behave this evening. What you must do is, keep Simon at a distance without making fun of him."

"Never fear, mamma! I am going to worship at the feet of the *unknown*."

That word, which brought a smile to Madame Beauvisage's lips, requires an explanation.

"Ah! I haven't seen him yet," said Philéas; "but everybody is talking about him. When I want to know who he is, I'll send the brigadier or Monsieur Groslier to ask him for his passport."

*

There are no small towns in France in which the drama or the comedy of *The Stranger* is not played at one time or another. It often happens that the stranger is an adventurer who makes dupes and then departs, carrying with him a woman's reputation or the money of a whole family. More often the stranger is a genuine stranger whose life remains shrouded in mystery long enough for the town in question to take an absorbing interest in his acts and movements. Now, the probable accession to power of Simon Giguet was not the only grave event of present interest. For two days the attention of the town of Arcis had been concentrated upon a person who had arrived there three days before and who was the *first stranger* within the memory of the present generation. So it was that the unknown was the principal topic of conversation in every family. He was the log that fell from the sky into the city of frogs.

The situation of Arcis-sur-Aube will explain the effect which a stranger's arrival there was certain to produce. About six leagues before Troyes on the stage road from Paris, at a farmhouse called La Belle-Etoile, is the starting point of a departmental road which leads to the town of Arcis across a broad level tract through which the Seine runs in a narrow green valley, shaded by poplars, which stand sharply

out against the chalky soil of Champagne. The road connecting Arcis and Troyes is six leagues long and forms the chord of an arc, whose extremities are Arcis and Troyes, so that the shortest route from Paris to Arcis is by the departmental road which you take at La Belle-Etoile. The Aube, as we have said, is navigable only from Arcis to its mouth. Thus that town, situated six leagues from the high road, separated from Troyes by monotonous plains, is lost as it were in the desert, without commerce, or means of transportation by land or water. Sézanne on the other hand, which lies only a few leagues from Arcis on the other side of the Aube, is traversed by a high road which is shorter by eight posts than the old road from Germany to Troyes. Arcis therefore is an entirely isolated town, to which no public carriage runs, and which has no other connection than by carriers with Troyes and with the station at La Belle-Etoile. All the inhabitants know one another, they even know the commercial travelers from the Parisian business houses, and so, as in all small provincial towns similarly situated, a stranger is certain to set every tongue in motion and to excite every imagination, when he remains there more than two days without anyone learning his name or why he has come there.

Now, as all Arcis was in a state of tranquillity three days before the morning on which, by the will of the creator of so many histories, this one begins, the whole town had witnessed the arrival, by the road from La Belle-Etoile, of a stranger

driving a handsome tilbury drawn by a blooded horse, and accompanied by a small servant, no larger than one's hand, riding a saddle horse. The carrier who connected with the Troyes diligences had brought from La Belle-Etoile three trunks that had come from Paris, without address, and that belonged to the stranger, who had taken lodgings at *Le Mulet*. Everyone in Arcis concluded that evening that the individual in question intended to purchase the estate of Arcis, and he was spoken of in many households as the future owner of the château. The tilbury, the traveler, his horses and his servant, all seemed to belong to the highest social sphere.

The stranger, being fatigued doubtless, did not appear; perhaps he passed part of his time in making himself comfortable in the quarters he had selected, announcing his purpose to remain for some time. He desired to see the place his horses were to occupy in the stable, and he proved to be very exacting; he insisted that they should be kept apart from those belonging to the innkeeper and from any others that might come. In view of these extraordinary demands the maître d'hôtel at *Le Mulet* concluded that the guest was an Englishman. During the evening of the first day several attempts to obtain information were made by inquisitive individuals at *Le Mulet;* but they could obtain no light from the diminutive groom, who refused to answer any questions concerning his master, not by evasion or by silence, but by mocking retorts which

seemed beyond his years and indicated great depravity. After making a careful toilet and dining, the stranger set off on horseback about six o'clock, on the Brienne road, followed by his tiger, and did not return until very late. The innkeeper, his wife and his chambermaids discovered nothing by an examination of the stranger's trunks and effects that threw any light upon the rank, the name, the circumstances or the purposes of the mysterious guest.

The effect was incalculable. A thousand suggestions were made of a nature to require the intervention of the king's attorney.

On his return the stranger received a visit from the landlady, who handed him the book wherein, in accordance with the police regulations, he must enter his name, his rank, the purpose of his journey and the place from which he came.

"I will write nothing," he said to her. "If anyone should annoy you on the subject, you can say that I refused, and you can send the sub-prefect to me, for I have no passport. You will have a great many questions asked you about me," he continued; "but answer as you please; I do not wish you to know anything about me, even if you should learn anything in spite of me. If you annoy me, I shall go to the *Poste* on Place du Pont; understand that I expect to remain here a fortnight. It would vex me exceedingly to move, for I know that you are a sister of Gothard, one of the heroes of the Simeuse affair."

"Enough, monsieur!" replied the sister of Gothard, the steward of the Cinq-Cygnes.

After such a remark the stranger had no difficulty in keeping the landlady with him for about two hours, and he made her tell him everything she knew about Arcis, about everybody's financial condition, about everybody's private affairs and about all the public officials. The next day he rode away, followed by the tiger, and did not return until midnight. The reader will now understand Cécile's jest, which Madame Beauvisage believed to be without foundation.

Beauvisage and Cécile, although surprised at the order of the day promulgated by Séverine, were delighted with it. While his wife was changing her dress to go to see Madame Marion, Philéas listened to his daughter give voice to the conjectures which young girls so naturally form under such circumstances. Then, exhausted by his day's work, he went to bed when the mother and the daughter had left the house.

As will be imagined by those who know France, or Champagne—which is by no means the same thing—or small towns in general if you choose, there was a wildly excited assemblage at Madame Marion's that evening. The triumph of the younger Giguet was looked upon as a victory over the Comte de Gondreville, and the independence of Arcis in election matters seemed to be established forever. The news of the death of poor Charles Keller was considered a judgment of heaven, and

imposed silence upon all rival candidacies. Antonin Goulard, Frédéric Marest, Olivier Vinet, Monsieur Martener, all the functionaries, in fact, who had hitherto frequented that salon, whose opinions they did not consider opposed to the government created by the popular will in July 1839, came thither as usual, but one and all inflamed by curiosity concerning the attitude of the Beauvisage family. The salon, restored to its usual condition, did not exhibit the slightest trace of the meeting which seemed to have decided the fate of Master Simon.

At eight o'clock, four card-tables, each provided with four players, were in full blast. The small salon and the dining-room were full of people. Never, except on such great occasions as balls or fête-days, had Madame Marion seen groups standing about the door of the salon—like the tail of a comet.

"This is the dawn of favor," Olivier remarked to her, calling her attention to that spectacle, so delightful to a hostess who loves to receive.

"No one can say how high Simon may rise," replied Madame Marion. "These are days when men with plenty of perseverance and discretion may aspire to anything."

That reply was designed much less for Vinet than for Madame Beauvisage, who entered the room at that moment with her daughter, and came to congratulate her friend.

In order to avoid any indirect demand for her daughter's hand and the necessity of interpreting empty words, Cécile's mother took a seat at a

whist table and became engrossed in a conflict of wits to win a hundred *fiches*. A hundred fiches make fifty sous! When a card-player loses that amount at Arcis, people talk about it for two days. Cécile entered into conversation with Mademoiselle Mollot, one of her dear friends, and seemed to be seized with an extraordinary attack of affection for her. Mademoiselle Mollot was the beauty of Arcis as Cécile was the heiress. Monsieur Mollot, the clerk of the court at Arcis, occupied a house on the main square in the same relative situation as Beauvisage's on Place du Pont. Madame Mollot, who sat constantly at the window of her salon on the ground floor, had acquired, as a result of that habit, a prying inquisitiveness which had become an inveterate, chronic disease. Madame Mollot devoted herself to spying upon her neighbors as a nervous woman talks of her imaginary ills, with coquetry and passion. The moment that a peasant entered the square from the Brienne road she watched him and tried to divine for what purpose he could have come to Arcis; her mind was not at rest again until her peasant's visit was explained. She passed her life passing judgment upon events, men, things and households in Arcis. She was a tall, angular woman, daughter of a magistrate at Troyes, and had brought Monsieur Mollot, formerly Grévin's head clerk, by way of dowry, a sum sufficiently large to enable him to purchase the office of clerk. Everyone knows that the clerk of a lower court has the rank of a judge, just as the

chief clerk of a royal court has the rank of a councillor. Monsieur Mollot's position was due to the Comte de Gondreville, who had arranged the matter at the chancellor's office for Grévin's head clerk, with a word. The sole ambition of the Mollot family, father, mother and daughter, was to arrange a match between Ernestine Mollot—an only daughter, by the way—and Antonin Goulard. So that the refusal with which the Beauvisages had received the sub-prefect's advances had tightened the bond of friendship entertained by the Mollots for the Beauvisage family.

"I see somebody who's very impatient!" said Ernestine to Cécile, pointing to Simon Giguet. "Oh! he would like right well to come and talk with us; but everyone that comes in feels obliged to congratulate him and talk to him. More than fifty times I've heard him say: 'It is less to myself, I think, than to my father that I owe the good wishes of my fellow-citizens; but, in any event, pray believe that I shall devote myself to the furtherance not only of our general interests but of your own private interests.' I can tell what he is saying by the movement of his lips, and he looks at you every time with a martyr's eyes."

"Don't leave me once this whole evening, Ernestine," replied Cécile, "for I don't want to have to listen to his periods, made up of *alases* interspersed with sighs."

"What, you don't want to be the wife of a Keeper of the Seals?"

"Ah! is that as far as they have gone?" laughed Cécile.

"I assure you," replied Ernestine, "that just now, before you came, Monsieur Godivet, the recorder, declared in his enthusiasm that Simon would be Keeper of the Seals within three years."

"Do they rely on the protection of the Comte de Gondreville for that?" inquired the sub-prefect, as he came and sat down beside the two girls, divining that they were laughing at his friend Giguet.

"Ah! Monsieur Antonin," said the fair Ernestine Mollot, "you promised my mother to find out who the handsome stranger is; what do you know about him that's new?"

"To-day's events, mademoiselle, are vastly more important!" said Antonin, sitting down beside Cécile, like a diplomat overjoyed to escape general attention by taking refuge in a chat with young ladies. "My whole life as sub-prefect or prefect is at stake."

"What! will you not allow your friend Simon to be unanimously elected?"

"Simon is my friend, but the government is my master, and I intend to do my utmost to prevent Simon's election. And Madame Mollot here ought to lend me her aid, as the wife of a man whose duties connect him with the government."

"We ask nothing better than to be with you," rejoined the clerk's wife. "Mollot has told me what was done here this morning," she added in

an undertone.—"It was pitiful! One man and only one showed any talent—that was Achille Pigoult. Everybody agrees that he would be an orator who'd make his mark in the Chamber; and so, although he has nothing and although my daughter's an only daughter and will have her dowry in the first place, which will be sixty thousand francs, and what we shall leave her, of which I say nothing, and in addition to that, the property of Mollot's uncle, the miller, and my aunt Lambert at Troyes,—I give you my word that, if Monsieur Achille Pigoult should choose to do us the honor of thinking of her and should ask for her hand, I would give her to him, for my part, that is, if she liked him; but the little idiot doesn't want to marry except to suit her own fancy.—Mademoiselle Beauvisage is the one who puts those ideas in her head."

The sub-prefect received that double broadside like a man who is serenely conscious that he has thirty thousand francs a year and who is expecting a prefecture.

"Mademoiselle is right," he replied, glancing at Cécile; "she is rich enough to marry for love."

"Don't let's talk about marriage," said Ernestine. "You sadden my poor dear little Cécile, who confessed to me just now that, in order to be sure of being married for herself and not for her fortune, she longed for an adventure with a stranger who knew nothing of Arcis nor of the inheritances which are to make a Lady Crœsus of her, and that she would like to be the heroine of a romance in which she

should be loved and married for her own sake in the last chapter."

"That is very fine. I was already aware that mademoiselle was as witty as she is wealthy!" cried Olivier Vinet, joining the group around the young ladies, in contempt of the courtiers of Simon Giguet, the idol of the day.

"And that is how it was, Monsieur Goulard," said Cécile, with a smile, "that we came, by slow degrees, to the subject of the unknown."

"And she took him for the hero of the novel whose plot I have sketched," said Ernestine.

"Oh! oh!" said Madame Mollot, "a man of fifty! For shame!"

"How do you know that he's fifty?" queried Olivier Vinet with a smile.

"Faith!" said Madame Mollot, "this morning I was so curious that I took my opera-glass—"

"Bravo!" said the engineer of roads and bridges, who was paying court to the mother in order to get the daughter.

"And," continued Madame Mollot, "I saw the unknown shaving himself with such elegant razors! —They are mounted in gold or silver-gilt."

"In gold! in gold!" said Vinet. "When we are uncertain about things, we must imagine that they're of the finest quality. So that I, who, I give you my word, have never seen this gentleman, am sure that he is a count at the very least."

That remark, which was taken for a pun, called forth immoderate laughter. The small group whence

the laughter proceeded aroused the jealousy of the group of dowagers and the attention of the flock of black-coated men who surrounded Simon Giguet. As for the advocate, he was in despair at being unable to place his fortune and his future at the feet of the wealthy Cécile.

"O father," thought the deputy king's attorney, as he received congratulations on his involuntary pun,* "in what a tribunal you have compelled me to make my début!—A count (*comte*) with an *m*, mesdames and mesdemoiselles," he said. "A man as distinguished by his birth as by his manners, by his wealth and by his equipages, a dandy, a buck, a *yellow glove!*"

"He has the sweetest tilbury in the world, Monsieur Olivier," said Ernestine.

"How was it, Antonin, that you didn't tell me this morning that he had a tilbury, when we were talking about that conspirator; why the tilbury is an extenuating circumstance; he can't possibly be a republican."

"There is nothing that I would not do in the interest of your pleasures, mesdemoiselles," said Antonin Goulard. "We propose to find out whether he is a *comte* with an *m*, so that you may continue your *conte* with an *n*."

"And perhaps it will eventually become a history," said the civil engineer of the arrondissement.

"For the use of sub-prefects," suggested Olivier Vinet.

* The pun was supposed to consist in the use of the word *comte* (count), which has the same pronunciation as *conte*, a fable.

"How do you mean to go about it?" inquired Madame Mollot.

"Oh! ask Mademoiselle Beauvisage whom she would take for her husband if she were compelled to choose among the gentlemen here present," replied the sub-prefect, "and she would never answer!—Allow the sovereign power to retain its coquetry.—Never fear, mesdemoiselles, you shall know within ten minutes whether the unknown is a count or a traveling salesman."

Antonin Goulard left the little group of young ladies, for it included, in addition to Mademoiselle Berton, the tax-collector's daughter, an insignificant young person who played the rôle of satellite to Cécile and Ernestine, Mademoiselle Herbelot, sister of the second notary of Arcis, an old maid of thirty, sour and affected, and dressed like all old maids: she wore, over a green bombazine dress, an embroidered neckerchief, the corners of which were gathered at her waist in front and tied in the fashion that prevailed during the Terror.

"Julien," said the sub-prefect to his servant, in the reception-room, "you were employed at Gondreville six months, do you know how a count's coronet is made?"

"There are pearls at the nine points."

"Very well, go to *Le Mulet* and try to get a look at the tilbury belonging to the gentleman who is staying there; then come back and tell me what is painted on it. Now, do your work well and notice all the little details.—If you see the little servant,

in case you have observed the nine pearl points, ask him at what hour Monsieur le comte can receive the sub-prefect to-morrow. Don't drink or gossip, but come back at once, and when you return let me know by showing yourself at the door of the salon."

"Yes, Monsieur le sous-préfet."

The inn of *Le Mulet*, as we have already said, stands on the square, opposite the angle of Madame Marion's garden-wall, on the other side of the Brienne road. So that the solution of the problem need not long be delayed. Antonin Goulard returned to his place beside Mademoiselle Beauvisage.

"We talked so much about the stranger here last evening," said Madame Mollot, "that I dreamed about him all night."

"Aha!" said Vinet, "so you still dream of strangers, fair lady, eh?"

"You're an impertinent jackanapes; if I chose, I could make you dream of me!" she retorted. "So this morning, when I got up—"

It may be well to remark that Madame Mollot is esteemed in Arcis a witty woman, that is to say, she expresses her meaning so readily that she misuses her advantages. A Parisian, astray in those regions as the stranger was, would perhaps have considered her extremely loquacious.

"—I was dressing, naturally, and looking mechanically straight before me—"

"Out of the window," said Antonin Goulard.

"Why, yes, my dressing-room looks on the square.

Now, you know Poupart has put the stranger in one of the rooms with windows opposite mine—"

"One of the rooms, mamma!" interposed Ernestine. "The count occupies three rooms! The little servant, all dressed in black, has the first; he has made a sort of a salon of the second, and the unknown sleeps in the third."

"He has half of the rooms in *Le Mulet* then, hasn't he?" said Mademoiselle Herbelot.

"If he has, mademoiselle, what has that to do with his person?" said Madame Mollot, angry at being interrupted by an old maid. "We are talking about his person."

"Don't interrupt the orator," said Olivier Vinet.

"As I stooped—"

"Sitting down," said Antonin Goulard.

"Madame was doing as she should do," said Vinet; "she was dressing and looking at *Le Mulet!*"

In the provinces such jokes are permitted, because everybody has been talked out too long not to have recourse to the foolish remarks with which our fathers amused themselves before the introduction of English hypocrisy, one of those articles of merchandise against which customs officers are helpless.

"Don't interrupt the orator," said Mademoiselle Beauvisage, exchanging a smile with Vinet.

"—My eyes involuntarily wandered to the window of the room in which the stranger retired last night—I don't know at what time, for I didn't go to sleep until long after midnight.—I have the misfortune to be united to a man who snores so that

he shakes the floors and walls. If I go to sleep first, I sleep so sound that I don't hear anything; but if Mollot goes off first, my night is ruined."

"Then there are the times when you go together!" said Achille Pigoult, who had joined the merry group. "I see that you are talking about sleep—"

"Be quiet, naughty boy!" said Madame Mollot condescendingly.

"Do you understand?" Cécile asked Ernestine in a whisper.

"So I say that at one o'clock this morning he hadn't returned!" said Madame Mollot.

"He cheated you! The idea of his returning without your knowing it!" said Achille Pigoult. "Ah! that's a very shrewd fellow, he'll put us all in a bag and sell us on the market place!"

"To whom?" asked Vinet.

"To a matter of business! to an idea! to a theory!" replied the notary, with whom the deputy attorney exchanged a sly smile.

"Imagine my surprise," continued Madame Mollot, "when I saw material of such magnificence, such beauty, such splendor that I said to myself: 'He must have a dressing-gown of that glass-stuff that we all went to see at the Exposition of Manufactures.'—So I went and got my opera-glass and examined it.—But, great God! what did I see? Above the dressing-gown, where the head should be, I saw a huge mass, something like a knee.—No, I cannot describe my curiosity!"

"I can imagine it," said Antonin.

"No, you can't imagine it," said Madame Mollot, "for that knee—"

"Ah! I understand," said Olivier Vinet, with a roar of laughter, "the stranger was making his toilet as you were, and you saw his two knees,—"

"No, no!" cried Madame Mollot, "you make me say impossible things. The stranger was standing, he was holding an enormous sponge over a huge bowl, and that's all your bad jokes amount to, Monsieur Olivier. I should have recognized what you think I saw—"

"Oho! recognized!—you compromise yourself, madame!" said Antonin Goulard.

"Pray let me finish," retorted Madame Mollot. "It was his head! he was washing his face, and he hasn't a single hair—"

"Rash youth!" said Antonin Goulard. "He certainly hasn't come here with any idea of marriage. To get married here, one must have plenty of hair. It's in great demand."

"So I was right in saying that the unknown must be fifty years old. Men seldom wear a wig until they are as old as that. And, in fact, when his toilet was finished, he opened his window; I saw him then, arrayed in a superb head of black hair, and he quizzed and ogled me finely when I went out on my balcony. And so, my dear Cécile, you mustn't take my gentleman for the hero of your romance."

"Why not? Men of fifty aren't to be despised when they are counts," rejoined Ernestine.

"He may have some hair after all," said Olivier Vinet maliciously, "and in that case he would be very eligible. What we should find out is whether he showed Madame Mollot his bare head, or—"

"Be quiet!" said Madame Mollot.

Antonin Goulard at once despatched Madame Marion's servant to *Le Mulet* with an order for Julien.

"Mon Dieu! what difference does a husband's age make?" said Mademoiselle Herbelot.

"So long as you get one," added the deputy attorney, who was generally feared by reason of his unfeeling spitefulness and his mockery.

"Why," replied the old maid, feeling the sting of the epigram, "I should prefer a man of fifty, who was kind and indulgent, and full of consideration for his wife, to a young man of twenty or thereabouts, without a heart, whose sharp wit buried its teeth in everybody, his wife included—"

"That does very well for conversational purposes," said Olivier Vinet; "but, in order to prefer an oldster of fifty to a younger man, one must have them to choose between."

"Ah!" said Madame Mollot, to put an end to the war of words between the old maid and young Vinet, who always went too far, "when a woman has had some experience of life, she knows that whether a husband is fifty years old or twenty-five makes absolutely no difference so long as she esteems him.—The important thing in marriage is the advantage you seek to gain by it. If Mademoiselle

Beauvisage wants to go to Paris, to make her mark there—and if I were in her place, I should want to—I certainly wouldn't take a husband in the town of Arcis.—If I had had the money she will have some day, I would very soon have given my hand to a count, to a man who would have placed me in a high position socially, and I wouldn't have asked to see his certificate of birth."

"It would have been enough for you to see him at his toilet," said Vinet to Madame Mollot in an undertone.

"But the king makes counts, madame!" observed Madame Marion, who had been watching the group of young people for a moment or two.

"Ah! madame," rejoined Vinet, "there are girls who like counts already made."

"Well, Monsieur Antonin," said Cécile, laughing at Vinet's sarcasm, "our ten minutes have passed, and we don't know yet whether the unknown is a count."

"The government should be infallible!" said Vinet, glancing at Antonin.

"I propose to keep my promise," replied the sub-prefect, as he spied his servant's face at the door of the salon.

Once more he left his seat beside Cécile.

"Are you talking about the stranger?" said Madame Marion. "Does anyone know anything about him?"

"No, madame," replied Achille Pigoult; "but he is, without knowing it, like an athlete in a circus,

the cynosure of the eyes of two thousand natives.—For my part, I know something," added the little notary.

"Oh! do tell us, Monsieur Achille," said Ernestine eagerly.

"His servant's name is Paradis."

"Paradis!" echoed every member of the circle.

"Can people be called Paradis?" queried Madame Herbelot, joining the group and taking a place beside her sister-in-law.

"That tends to prove that his master is an angel," continued the little notary, "for, when his servant follows him—you understand—"

"It's the Paradise road! That is very bright," said Madame Marion, who was bent upon enlisting Achille Pigoult in her nephew's interest.

"Monsieur," Antonin's servant was saying to his master meanwhile, in the dining-room, "the tilbury has a crest on the panels—"

"A crest!"

"And the arms are funny enough, I tell you, monsieur! there's a coronet with nine points, and pearls—"

"Then he's a count!"

"And there's a winged monster chasing about smashing things, exactly like a postilion who has lost something! And this is what is written on the streamer," he said, taking a paper from his pocket. "Mademoiselle Anicette, the Princesse de Cadignan's lady's-maid, who just came, in a carriage, you understand—the Cinq-Cygne carriage is in front

of the door—to bring the gentleman a letter, copied it for me."

"Give it to me!"

The sub-prefect read:

Quo me trahit fortuna.

Although he was not sufficiently familiar with French heraldry to know what family bore that device on their crest, Antonin reflected that the Cinq-Cygnes would hardly lend their chariot and the Princesse de Cadignan send a special messenger except to a member of the most exalted nobility.

"Ah! so you know the Princesse de Cadignan's lady's-maid, do you? You're a lucky fellow!" said Antonin.

Julien, a native of the province, after serving six months at Gondreville, had entered the employ of the sub-prefect, who wished to have a *well-trained* servant.

"Why, monsieur, Anicette is my father's god-daughter. Papa, who wanted to do well by the little one, her father being dead, sent her to Paris to learn dressmaking, because mother couldn't endure her."

"Is she pretty?"

"Rather pretty, Monsieur le sous-préfet. The proof is that she got into trouble in Paris; but at last, as she has some talent, knows how to make dresses and to dress hair, she was taken into the Princesse de Cadignan's service through the influence of Monsieur Marin, Monsieur le Duc de Maufrigneuse's first *valet de chambre*."

"What did she say about Cinq-Cygne? Are there many people there?"

"A good many, monsieur. There's the Princesse de Cadignan and Monsieur d'Arthez, the Duc and Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, the young marquis—in fact, the château is full.—Monseigneur the Bishop of Troyes is expected this evening."

"Monseigneur Troubert?—Ah! I would like right well to know if he is to stay there some time."

"Anicette thinks so, and she fancies that monseigneur has come on account of the count who is staying at *Le Mulet*. They expect still more people. The coachman said that there's a good deal of talk about the elections. Monsieur le Président Michu is to pass some days there."

"Try to induce this maid to come into town, on some pretext or other.—Have you any designs on her?"

"If she had anything of her own, I wouldn't say no!—She's very sly."

"Tell her to come to see you at the sub-prefecture."

"Very good, monsieur, I will do it."

"Don't mention me to her! she wouldn't come; offer her a good place."

"Ah! monsieur,—I have been employed at Gondreville."

"You don't know the reason for this message from Cinq-Cygne at this time of night? it's half-past nine."

"It seems that it's something very urgent, for the count, who just returned from Gondreville—"

"The stranger has been to Gondreville?"

"He dined there, Monsieur le sous-préfet. And—it will make you laugh!—the little servant is, with all respect, drunk as a fiddler. He drank so much champagne in the servants' quarters that he can't stand on his legs; they must have pressed him to drink as a joke."

"Well, what about the count?"

"The count had gone to bed, and when he read the letter he got up and is dressing now. They are putting his horse in the tilbury. The count is going to pass the night at Cinq-Cygne."

"He must be some very great personage, then?"

"Oh! yes, monsieur; for Gothard, the steward at Cinq-Cygne, came to see his brother-in-law Poupart this morning, and urged him to keep his mouth closed tight concerning this gentleman, and to serve him as if he was a king—"

"Can Vinet be right?" said the sub-prefect to himself. "Is there a conspiracy under all this?"

"It was Duc Georges de Maufrigneuse who sent Monsieur Gothard to *Le Mulet*. The explanation of Poupart's coming to that meeting here this morning is that this count wanted him to come. If he should tell Poupart to go to Paris to-night, Poupart would start right off. Gothard told his brother-in-law to turn things upside-down for this gentleman, and to laugh at all inquisitive people."

"If you can get Anicette, don't fail to let me know!" said Antonin.

"But I can very well go to see her at Cinq-Cygne,

if you choose to give me an errand to your estate at Val-Preux, monsieur."

"That's an idea. You can take advantage of the carriage being here to be driven there. But what have you to say of the little servant?"

"He's a good one, that little fellow, Monsieur le sous-préfet! Just fancy, monsieur, that, drunk as he is, he just rode off on his master's magnificent English horse, a thoroughbred that travels seven leagues an hour, to carry a letter to Troyes, so that it will be in Paris to-morrow.—And he's only nine and a half! What will he be at twenty?"

The sub-prefect listened abstractedly to this last administrative gossip. Julien chattered on for several minutes. Antonin listened to him, thinking all the time of the stranger.

"Wait," he said to his servant.

"What a mess!" he muttered, as he walked slowly back to the salon. "A man who dines with the Comte de Gondreville and passes the night at Cinq-Cygne!—There's a mystery, on my word!"

"Well?" cried Mademoiselle Beauvisage's circle with one voice, when he reappeared.

"Well, he's a count, and of an old stock, I promise you!"

"Oh! how I would like to see him!" cried Cécile.

"Mademoiselle," said Antonin with a smile, glancing mischievously at Madame Mollot, "he is tall and well-built, and doesn't wear a wig! His little servant was as drunk as the twenty-two

cantons; they had filled him with champagne in the servants' quarters at Gondreville, and that child of nine answered Julien with the lofty pride of an old servant when Julien mentioned his master's wig: 'My master wear a wig! I would leave him!—He dyes his hair, that's bad enough!' "

"Your opera-glass magnified objects tremendously," said Achille Pigoult to Madame Mollot, who began to laugh.

"However, the handsome count's tiger, drunk as he is, is off to Troyes on horseback to carry a letter, and, although it's dark, he'll be there in an hour and a quarter."

"I would like to see the tiger, for my part," said Vinet.

"If he dined at Gondreville," said Cécile, "we shall learn who this count is, for grandpapa is going there to-morrow morning."

"What will seem strange to you," said Antonin Goulard, "is that Mademoiselle Anicette, the Princesse de Cadignan's maid, has been sent from Cinq-Cygne with a letter for the unknown, and that he is going to pass the night there."

"Aha!" said Vinet, "he's not a man at all, he's a devil, a phœnix! He is the friend of two châteaux, he would *poculer*—"*

"Fie, monsieur!" said Madame Mollot, "you use such words—"

"The Latinity of *poculer*, madame, is most unexceptionable," rejoined the deputy attorney

* *Poculer—i. e.*, to tipple.

gravely; "he would *poculer*, as I say, with King Louis-Philippe in the morning and feast with Charles X. at Holyrood Castle in the evening. There's only one motive that will permit a man to visit both camps, the Montagues and the Capulets. —Ah! I know who the man is; he's the manager of the railroad from Paris to Lyon, or from Paris to Dijon, or from Troyes to Montereau."

"True!" said Antonin. "You have got it. Nobody but bankers, manufacturers or speculators are made welcome everywhere."

"Yes, at this moment the greatest names, the greatest families, the old and new peerage are rushing at the double-quick into stock companies!" said Achille Pigoult.

"Francs attract the Franks," said Olivier Vinet, without a smile.

"You can hardly be called the olive branch (*olivier*) of peace," said Madame Mollot laughingly.

"But isn't it demoralizing to see the names of Verneuil, Maufrigneuse and Hérouville coupled with those of the Du Tillets and Nucingens in speculations that are quoted on the Bourse?"

"Our unknown is evidently a railroad not yet of age," said Vinet.

"Well, all Arcis is going to be turned topsy-turvy to-morrow," said Achille Pigoult. "I am going to see this gentleman in order to be employed as notary in the transaction! There will be two thousand deeds to draw."

"Our romance is becoming a locomotive," said Ernestine sadly to Cécile.

"A count with a railroad in his pocket is all the more tempting conjugally considered," observed Pigoult, "but is he a bachelor?"

"Oh! I shall find that out to-morrow from grandpapa," said Cécile with ostentatious enthusiasm.

"Ah! an excellent joke!" cried Madame Marion with a forced laugh. "What, Cécile, my little kitten, are you thinking about the unknown?"

"Why, the husband is always the unknown," said Olivier Vinet hastily, making a sign to Mademoiselle Beauvisage, which she understood perfectly.

"Why shouldn't I think of him?" she asked; "there's nothing compromising in that. And then he is, so these gentlemen say, either some great speculator, or some great nobleman.—Faith! either of the two would suit me. I love Paris! I love to have a carriage, a fine house, a box at the Italiens, etc."

"That's right," said Olivier Vinet, "when you dream, you mustn't deny yourself anything. However, if I were fortunate enough to be your brother, I'd marry you to the young Marquis de Cinq-Cygne, who seems to me to be a young blade that will make the gold pieces dance and laugh at his mother's aversion for the actors in the drama in which our worthy president's father so unluckily lost his life."

"It would be easier for you to become Prime

Minister!" said Madame Marion; "there will never be an alliance between the granddaughter of the Grévins and the Cinq-Cygne family!"

"Romeo came very near marrying Juliet!" said Achille Pigoult, "and mademoiselle is lovelier than—"

"Oh! if you're going to draw on the opera!" artlessly observed Herbelot the notary, who had just finished his game of whist.

"My confrère," said Pigoult, "is not very well posted in the history of the Middle Ages."

"Come, Malvina!" said the stout notary, without replying to his younger confrère's remark.

"Tell me, Monsieur Antonin," Cécile said to the sub-prefect, "you spoke of Mademoiselle Anicette, the Princesse de Cadignan's maid—do you know her?"

"No, but Julien knows her; she's his father's god-daughter, and they are on very good terms."

"Oh! then, do try, through Julien, to get her for us; mamma wouldn't think about wages."

"To hear, mademoiselle, is to obey! as they say to despots in Asia," replied the sub-prefect. "You will see what efforts I will put forth to serve you!"

He left the room to order Julien to overtake the carriage which was returning to Cinq-Cygne, and to lure Anicette away at any price. At that moment Simon Giguet, who had finished his verbal curvetting before all the influential men in Arcis, and who considered himself certain of his election,

joined the circle that surrounded Cécile and Mademoiselle Mollot. The evening was far advanced. The clock was striking ten. Having consumed enormous quantities of cake and numberless glasses of orgeat, punch, lemonade and divers syrups, those guests who had come to Madame Marion's on that occasion for political reasons only, and who were not accustomed to those walls, which they were wont to consider aristocratic, took their leave the more promptly because they never sat up so late. The party thereupon assumed a more private character. Simon Giguet hoped that he might be able to exchange a few words with Cécile, and he looked at her with a triumphant expression. That expression irritated Cécile.

"My dear fellow," Antonin said to Simon, as he observed the halo of success gleaming around his face, "you come at a moment when the people of Arcis have been put in the wrong—"

"Altogether in the wrong," interposed Ernestine, as Cécile nudged her elbow. "Cécile and I are mad over the unknown: we are fighting for him!"

"In the first place, he's not an unknown any longer," said Cécile, "he's a count!"

"What an impostor!" replied Simon with a contemptuous sneer.

"Would you say that, Monsieur Simon," retorted Cécile, piqued by his manner, "to the face of a man to whom the Princesse de Cadignan has just sent her servants with a letter, who dined at Gondreville

to-day and is going to pass this very night at the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne's?"

This was said so earnestly and in such a severe tone that Simon was disconcerted.

"Ah! mademoiselle," said Olivier Vinet, "if we should say to one another's faces what we all say behind one another's backs, society would no longer be possible. The pleasures of society, especially in the provinces, consist in speaking ill of one another."

"Monsieur Simon is jealous of your enthusiasm for the unknown count," said Ernestine.

"It seems to me," said Cécile, "that Monsieur Simon has no right to be jealous of any of my sentiments."

With those words, uttered with an accent calculated to crush Simon, Cécile rose; everyone made way for her, and she went to her mother, who was settling her whist accounts.

"It seems to me that you are very hard on my poor Simon, my love!" said Madame Marion, running after the heiress.

"What has she done, dear little puss?" inquired Madame Beauvisage.

"Mamma, Monsieur Simon insulted my stranger with the word *impostor*."

Simon followed his aunt and arrived upon the battlefield of the card-table. Thus the four persons whose interests were so momentous were assembled in the centre of the salon, Cécile and her mother on one side of the table, Madame Marion and her nephew on the other.

"In truth, madame," said Simon, "you must agree that a person must needs be very desirous to put another in the wrong to be angry at what I have just said concerning a gentleman of whom all Arcis is talking and who is staying at *Le Mulet.*"

"Do you consider that he is entering into competition with you?" said Madame Beauvisage jocosely.

"I should certainly be exceedingly ill-disposed toward him, if he should be the cause of the slightest misunderstanding between Mademoiselle Cécile and myself," said the candidate, with an imploring glance at the girl.

"You spoke in a very cutting tone when you pronounced your judgment, monsieur, proving that you propose to be very despotic, and you are right; if you want to be a minister, you must be prepared to cut—"

At that moment Madame Marion took Madame Beauvisage's arm and led her to a sofa. Cécile, being left alone, returned to the circle she had just quitted, to avoid listening to such reply as Simon might make, and the candidate, looking very foolish, remained by the table, where he amused himself by playing mechanically with the counters —*fiches.*

"There are such things as consolation prizes—*fiches de consolation,*"—said Olivier Vinet, who was following the little scene.

That remark, although made in an undertone, was overheard by Cécile, who could not refrain from laughing.

"My dear friend," said Madame Marion, in a low

voice, to Madame Beauvisage, "you see that nothing can prevent my nephew's election now."

"I am overjoyed for you and for the Chamber of Deputies," said Séverine.

"My nephew, my dear, will rise very high.—This is why I say so: his own fortune, with that his father will leave him, and mine, will give him about thirty thousand francs a year. When a man is in the Chamber and has such a fortune as that, he can aspire to anything."

"He will have our admiration, madame, and our best wishes will follow him in his political career; but—"

"I don't ask you for an answer!" exclaimed Madame Marion, hastily interrupting her friend. "I simply ask you to reflect upon this proposition. Are our children suited to each other? can we make a match? We will live in Paris during the whole session; and who can say that the Deputy from Arcis will not be permanently installed there in a fine berth in the magistracy?—See how Monsieur Vinet of Provins has made his way! People blamed Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf for marrying him; before long she'll be the wife of a Keeper of the Seals, and Monsieur Vinet will be a peer of France when he chooses."

"Madame, I am not free to marry my daughter to suit my own inclinations. In the first place her father and I propose to leave her perfect freedom of choice. If she should choose to marry this *unknown*, we should give our consent, provided he's a proper

husband for her. Then, too, Cécile is entirely dependent on her grandfather, who will agree, in the contract, to give her a house in Paris, the Beauséant mansion, which he bought for us ten years ago, and which is worth eight hundred thousand francs to-day. It's one of the finest houses in Faubourg Saint-Germain. Besides that he has set aside two hundred thousand francs to cover the expense of setting up an establishment there. A grandfather who acts in that way and who can also induce my mother-in-law to make some sacrifices for her granddaughter in view of an advantageous marriage, has the right to advise."

"Most certainly!" said Madame Marion, stupefied by this confidential communication which made her nephew's marriage to Cécile vastly more difficult to arrange.

"Even if Cécile had no reason to expect anything from her grandfather Grévin," continued Madame Beauvisage, "she should not marry without consulting him. The son-in-law my father selected is dead; I do not know his present intentions. If you have any proposition to make, go and see my father."

"Very well, I will go," said Madame Marion.

Madame Beauvisage made a sign to Cécile and they both left the salon.

*

The next day, Antonin and Frédéric Marest, Monsieur Martener and Olivier met as usual, after dinner, under the lindens of the Avenue of Sighs, and smoked their cigars as they sauntered along together. That after-dinner promenade is one of the petty amusements of provincial authorities when they are on good terms with one another.

After they had taken several turns Simon Giguet joined them, and said to the sub-prefect with a mysterious air:

"You ought to be true to an old schoolmate who means to procure the rosette of an officer in the Legion of Honor and a prefecture for you!"

"You're beginning your political career already," said Antonin with a laugh; "are you trying to bribe me, you fierce puritan?"

"Will you assist me?"

"My dear fellow, you know very well that Bar-sur-Aube comes here to vote. Who can promise a majority under those circumstances? My colleague at Bar-sur-Aube would complain if I shouldn't exert myself as much as he does to further the wishes of the government, and your promise is conditional, whereas my removal would be certain."

"But I have no competitors!"

"You think not," said Antonin, "but

"And that aunt of mine knows that I am on burning coals and yet she doesn't come!" cried Giguet. "Oh! these last three hours have been like three years!"

His secret escaped him! He admitted to his friend that Madame Marion had gone to propose him to old Grévin as Cécile's future husband. The two friends had walked as far as the Brienne road, opposite *Le Mulet.* While the advocate watched the sloping street up which his aunt would come from the bridge, the sub-prefect examined the gullies that the rain had made in the square. Arcis is not paved with sandstone or pebble, for the plains of Champagne furnish no suitable building material, much less flints large enough to metal roads. One or two streets and some isolated spots have the centre graded and crowned, but all the others are imperfectly macadamized, and that fact alone is enough to indicate their condition in rainy weather. The sub-prefect pretended, for the sake of appearances, to be expending his mental energy upon that important subject, but he did not lose a single symptom of the suffering depicted on his companion's altered features.

At that moment the stranger returned from the château de Cinq-Cygne, where he had evidently passed the night. Goulard determined to solve for himself the mystery that enveloped the unknown, who was enveloped physically in the then fashionable style of overcoat called a *paletot.* A cloak, thrown over his legs like a rug, concealed the lower

AT THE INN OF LE MULET

And he handed the sub-prefect a letter thus conceived:

(*Private.*)

PREFECTURE OF THE AUBE

"*Monsieur le Sous-préfet,*

"*You will take measures with the bearer of these presents concerning the Arcis election, and you will comply with whatever requests he may make of you. I urge you to observe the utmost discretion and to treat him with the consideration due to his rank.*"

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part of his body. Lastly, a huge muffler of red cashmere covered his face to his eyes. His hat, although perched jauntily on the side of his head, did not appear in the least ridiculous. Never was mystery so mysteriously swathed and bundled up.

"Look out!" cried the tiger, who rode ahead of the tilbury.—"Open the gate, Papa Poupart!" he cried in a shrill, piping voice.

The three servants of *Le Mulet* flocked to the gate, and the tilbury passed in, without anybody's having succeeded in catching a glimpse of a single one of the stranger's features. The sub-prefect followed the tilbury as far as the gateway of the inn.

"Maman Poupart," said Antonin, "will you kindly ask your Monsieur—Monsieur—?"

"I don't know his name," said Gothard's sister.

"You are doing wrong! the police ordinances are explicit, and Monsieur Groslier isn't a trifler, like most commissioners of police who have nothing to do."

"Innkeepers never do wrong at election time," said the tiger, as he dismounted.

"I must repeat that remark to Vinet," said the sub-prefect to himself.—"Go and ask your master if he can receive the sub-prefect of Arcis."

And Antonin rejoined the three loungers, who had halted at the end of the avenue when they saw the sub-prefect conversing with the tiger, who was already famous in Arcis by reason of his name and his repartees.

"Monsieur requests Monsieur le sous-préfet to come to his room, he will be pleased to receive him," said Paradis to the sub-prefect a few moments later.

"My boy," said Olivier, "how much does your master pay a youngster of your make and your wit?"

"Pay me, monsieur?—what do you take me for? —Monsieur le comte allows himself to be robbed, and I am satisfied."

"That child is in a good school," said Frédéric Marest.

"The high school, Monsieur le Procureur du Roi!" retorted Paradis, leaving the five friends utterly astounded by his self-possession.

"What a Figaro!" cried Vinet.

"You mustn't depreciate us," rejoined the child. "My master calls me little Robert Macaire. Since we've known how to raise funds, we are Figaros plus the savings-bank."

"What do you earn?"

"There are races in which I earn a thousand crowns—without selling my master, monsieur."

"Sublime child!" said Vinet, "he knows the turf—"

"And all the *gentlemen riders*," said the child, putting out his tongue at Vinet.

"The Paradise road is a long one," said Frédéric Marest.

Introduced by the host of *Le Mulet*, Goulard found the unknown in the room he had taken for a

parlor, and was subjected to the stare of a monocle held in the eye at a most impertinent angle.

"Monsieur," said Antonin Goulard with something like haughtiness, "I have just learned from the innkeeper's wife that you refused to comply with the police ordinances, and, as I make no doubt that you are a person of distinction, I have come myself—"

"Is your name Goulard?" demanded the stranger in a nasal voice.

"I am sub-prefect, monsieur—" replied Antonin.

"Did not your father belong to the Simeuse faction?"

"And I, monsieur, belong to the goverment; that's the difference between those days and these."

"You have a servant named Julien, who is trying to carry off the Princesse de Cadignan's maid?"

"Monsieur, I allow no one to speak to me in that way," said Goulard, "you mistake my character—"

"And you wish to know mine!" retorted the stranger. "I make myself known to you therefore. You may enter on the innkeeper's register:—'Impertinent, Paris, Age doubtful, Inquisitive, Traveling for pleasure.'—It would be a very popular innovation in France to adopt the English method of allowing people to go and come according to their good pleasure, without pestering them to death, without demanding their *papers* every minute in the day. I have no passport, what will you do to me?"

"Monsieur le procureur du roi is out yonder, under the lindens," said the sub-prefect.

"Monsieur Marest?—Pray wish him good-morning for me."

"But who are you?"

"Whoever you please to have me, my dear Monsieur Goulard," said the stranger, "for it is for you to decide in what capacity I shall figure in this arrondissement. Give me some advice as to my conduct. Here, read this."

And he handed the sub-prefect a letter thus conceived:

(Private.)

PREFECTURE OF THE AUBE.

"Monsieur le Sous-préfet,

"You will take measures with the bearer of these presents concerning the Arcis election, and you will comply with whatever requests he may make of you. I urge you to observe the utmost discretion and to treat him with the consideration due to his rank."

The letter was written and signed by the prefect.

"You hit upon the right thing by accident!" said the stranger, taking back the letter.

Antonin Goulard, impressed by his interlocutor's gentlemanly air and aristocratic manners, became respectful.

"How so, monsieur?" he inquired.

"By trying to corrupt Anicette. She came and told us of the attempts made by Julien, whom you might call Julien the Apostate, for he was

conquered by young Paradis, my tiger, and he finally confessed that you wanted to place Anicette in the service of the richest family in Arcis. Now, as the Beauvisage family is the richest in Arcis, I have no doubt that Mademoiselle Cécile is the one who wishes to possess that treasure—"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Very well, Anicette will enter the Beauvisages' service this morning."

He whistled. Paradis appeared so quickly that the stranger said to him:

"You were listening!"

"In spite of myself, Monsieur le Comte; the partitions are like paper. If Monsieur le Comte wishes, I will go to an upper room."

"No, you may listen, it's your right. It's my place to speak low when I don't want you to know my business.—You will return to Cinq-Cygne and give this twenty-franc piece to little Anicette from me.—Julien will seem to have bribed her on your behalf," he said, turning to Antonin. "That piece of gold informs her that she may go with Julien. Anicette may be of great assistance in securing the success of our candidate."

"Anicette?"

"For thirty-two years, monsieur, ladies' maids have served my ends.—I had my first adventure at thirteen, precisely like the Regent our king's grandfather in the fourth generation.—Do you know the amount of Mademoiselle Beauvisage's fortune?"

"It is impossible to know the amount of it,

monsieur; yesterday, for instance, at Madame Marion's, Madame Séverine said that Monsieur Grévin, Cécile's grandfather, would give his granddaughter the Hôtel Beauséant and two hundred thousand francs for a wedding present."

The stranger's eyes expressed no surprise; he seemed to look upon it as a very moderate fortune.

"Do you know Arcis well?" he asked Goulard.

"I am the sub-prefect and I was born in the province."

"Very well, how can one baffle curiosity here?"

"Why, by gratifying it. For instance, Monsieur le Comte has his baptismal name: let him put that on the register with his title."

"Very good; Comte Maxime."

"And if monsieur will assume the character of manager of the railroad, Arcis will be satisfied: you can amuse the town with that floating stick for a fortnight."

"No, I prefer the office of irrigator, it isn't so common. I have come to increase the value of land in Champagne. That, my dear Monsieur Goulard, will be a reason why you should invite me to dine at your house with the Beauvisages to-morrow.—I am anxious to see them, to study them."

"I shall be only too happy to entertain you," said the sub-prefect; "but I must ask your indulgence for the discomforts of my poor house."

"If I succeed in carrying the election at Arcis in accordance with the wishes of those who send me

here, you shall be prefect, my dear friend," said the stranger. "Look, read these," he added, handing Antonin two other letters.

"Very good, Monsieur le Comte," said Goulard, returning the letters.

"Run over all the votes that are at the disposal of the ministry; and above all things, let us not seem to have any understanding. I am a speculator and I scorn elections!"

"I will send the commissioner of police to compel you to enter your name on Poupart's book."

"That's a good idea.—Adieu, monsieur.—What a country this is!" added the count, aloud. "A man can't take a step here without having the whole town, even to the sub-prefect, on his back!"

"You can arrange matters with the commissioner of police, monsieur," said Antonin.

Twenty minutes later at Madame Mollot's, every one was talking of an altercation that had taken place between the sub-prefect and the unknown.

"Well, of what sort of wood is the log that has fallen into our swamp?" said Olivier Vinet to Goulard when the latter emerged from *Le Mulet*.

"He's a Comte Maxime who has come here to study the geological formation of Champagne, with the idea of finding mineral springs," replied the sub-prefect with an air of unconcern.

"Say resources,"* rejoined Olivier.

* Another play upon words. Goulard said: "With the idea of finding mineral springs—*sources minerales*."
"Dites des *ressources*," is Vinet's reply.

"Does he expect to interest capital in the province?" said Monsieur Martener.

"I doubt whether our royalists will be taken in by those mines," said Olivier with a smile.

"What do you make of Madame Marion's manner and gestures?" said the sub-prefect, changing the subject by calling attention to Simon and his aunt conferring together.

Simon had gone to meet his aunt and they were talking on the square.

"Why, if he were accepted, I should suppose that a single word would suffice to tell him so," replied the deputy attorney.

"Well?" said the three functionaries with one voice to Simon, as he joined them under the lindens.

"Well, my aunt has strong hopes. Madame Beauvisage and old Grévin, who was just starting for Gondreville, were not surprised at our suit; they talked about our respective fortunes, they mean to leave Cécile entirely free to choose for herself. At last Madame Beauvisage said that, so far as she was concerned, she could see no objection to an alliance by which she should consider herself highly honored, that she would, however, let her reply depend upon my election, and perhaps upon my début in the Chamber, and old Grévin talked about consulting the Comte de Gondreville, without whose opinion he never decided any question of importance."

"In that case," said Goulard with decision, "you'll never marry Cécile, old boy!"

"Why not, pray?" cried Giguet ironically.

"My dear fellow, Madame Beauvisage and her daughter and her husband will pass four evenings a week in your aunt's salon; your aunt is the most *comme il faut* woman in Arcis; although she is twenty years older than Madame Beauvisage, that lady envies her, and do you suppose they won't wrap up a refusal in some courteous phrases—?"

"To say neither yes nor no," added Vinet, "is to say no, taking into consideration the intimate relations between your two families. If Madame Beauvisage is the richest woman in Arcis, Madame Marion is the most highly esteemed; for, with the exception of our president's wife, who sees no one, she is the only one who knows how to have a *salon;* she is the queen of Arcis. Madame Beauvisage seems to be disposed to couch her refusal in polite terms, that's the whole of it."

"It seems to me that old Grévin laughed at your aunt, my dear fellow," said Frédéric Marest.

"You attacked the Comte de Gondreville yesterday, you hurt his feelings, you seriously offended him, for Achille Pigoult defended him manfully,—and they are going to consult him about your marriage to Cécile!"

"It is impossible to be craftier than old Père Grévin," said Vinet.

"Madame Beauvisage is ambitious," said Goulard, "and knows very well that her daughter will have two millions; she means to be mother-in-law of a

minister or an ambassador, in order to sit on a throne in Paris."

"Well, why not?" said Simon Giguet.

"I wish you may be either!" rejoined the sub-prefect, glancing at the deputy attorney, with whom he began to laugh when they were a few steps away.—"He won't even be chosen deputy," he said to Olivier; "the ministry has plans of its own. You will find at home a letter from your father, who urges you to make sure of those persons in your office whose votes belong to the ministry; your promotion is at stake, and he recommends the utmost secrecy."

"And for whom are our bailiffs, our solicitors, our justices of the peace, our notaries to vote?" inquired Vinet.

"For the candidate whom I shall name to you."

"But how do you know that my father has written to me, and what he has written to me?"

"From the stranger."

"The man of mines?"

"My dear Vinet, we must not know him, we must treat him as a stranger.—He saw your father at Provins as he passed through. A moment ago this personage greeted me with a line from the prefect telling me to follow whatever instructions Comte Maxime gives me concerning the election in Arcis. I could not fail to have a battle to fight, I knew it perfectly well! Let us go and dine together and set up our batteries: it's a matter of your becoming king's attorney at Mantes and of my

obtaining a prefecture, and we must not appear to meddle in the elections, for we're between the hammer and the anvil. Simon is the candidate of a party that seeks to overturn the present ministry and may succeed; but for people who know as much as we do, there's only one course to take."

"What is that?"

"To serve those who make and unmake ministries.—And the letter that was shown me is from one of those persons who are the godfathers of immutable thought."

*

Before going farther it is necessary to explain who this *miner* was, and what he expected to extract from the soil of Champagne.

About two months before the triumph of Simon Giguet as a candidate, one evening at eleven o'clock, just as tea was being served in the salon of the Marquise d'Espard in Faubourg Saint-Honoré, the Chevalier d'Espard, her brother-in-law, remarked, as he placed his cup on the table and glanced at the circle around the fire:

"Maxime was very melancholy to-night—don't you think so?"

"Why, his melancholy is easily explained," said Rastignac, "he is forty-eight years old; at that age a man has ceased to make friends; and when we buried De Marsay, Maxime lost the only man capable of understanding him, of serving him and of making use of him."

"He has some pressing debts, no doubt; couldn't you put him in a way to pay them?" the marchioness asked Rastignac.

At that moment Rastignac was in the ministry for the second time; he had just been made a count almost in spite of himself; his father-in-law, Baron de Nucingen, had been made a peer of France; his brother was a bishop; the Comte de la Roche-Hugon, his brother-in-law, was an ambassador; and he

himself was looked upon as an indispensable factor in future ministerial combinations.

"You constantly forget, my dear marchioness," he replied, "that our government exchanges its silver for nothing but gold; it knows nothing about men."

"Is Maxime a man to blow out his brains?" inquired the banker Du Tillet.

"Ah! you would like to have me do it, then we should be quits!" retorted Comte Maxime de Trailles, whom everybody supposed to have gone away.

The count rose like a ghost from the depths of an easy-chair behind the Chevalier d'Espard's. Everybody began to laugh.

"Will you have a cup of tea?" said the young Comtesse de Rastignac, whom the marchioness had requested to do the honors in her stead.

"With pleasure," replied the count, taking a seat in front of the fireplace.

This man, the prince of Parisian ne'er-do-wells, had up to that day maintained himself in the superior position occupied by the dandies, then called *yellow gloves* and afterwards *lions*. It is useless to tell the story of his youth, which was full of love intrigues and made notable by ghastly dramas in which he had always succeeded in keeping within the bounds of social propriety. To that man women were never aught but instruments; he believed in their sufferings no more than in their enjoyments; he treated them, as the late De Marsay did, like naughty children. After running through his own

fortune he had consumed that of a celebrated courtesan called La Belle Hollandaise, mother of the famous Esther Gobseck. Then he had been the cause of the misfortunes of Madame de Restaud, sister of Madame Delphine de Nucingen, who was the young Comtesse de Rastignac's mother. Parisian society presents the most incredible anomalies. The Baronne de Nucingen was sitting in Madame d'Espard's salon at that moment, in the presence of the author of all her sister's woes, an assassin who had murdered a woman's happiness. That undoubtedly was why he was there. Madame de Nucingen had dined at the marchioness's with her daughter, married a year previous to the Comte de Rastignac, who had begun his political career in the office of Under-Secretary of State in the notorious ministry of the late De Marsay, the only great statesman produced by the Revolution of July.

Comte Maxime de Trailles alone knew how many catastrophes he had caused; but he had always sheltered himself from blame, by obeying the provisions of the code-human. Although he had dissipated during his life more money than the four galleys of France had stolen in the same time, the law treated him with respect. He had never been found wanting in the point of honor, he paid his gambling debts with scrupulous exactness. Being a wonderfully skilful card-player, he played with the greatest noblemen and ambassadors. He dined with all the members of the diplomatic corps. He fought duels; he had killed two or three men in his

day, had almost murdered them in fact, for his address and self-possession were incomparable. No young man of the time equaled him in dress or distinguished bearing, in refinement of speech, in ease of manner, which used to be called *having a grand air*. In the capacity of page to the Emperor, trained from the age of twelve in the art of riding, he was reckoned one of the cleverest of equerries. As he had never had less than five horses in his stable, he was prominent on the turf and always set the fashion. Moreover, no one was a greater success than he at young men's supper-parties; he would drink more than the most seasoned of them, and would come out as fresh as a rose and ready to begin again, as if debauchery were his element. Maxime was one of those despised men who have the art of repressing the contempt they inspire by the insolence of their bearing and the fear they arouse, but he never deceived himself as to his position. That was the secret of his strength. Men of strong mind are always their own critics. Under the Restoration he had made the most of his former experience as page to the Emperor; he attributed to his alleged Bonapartist opinions the rebuffs he had encountered from the different ministries when he asked to be allowed to serve the Bourbons; for, notwithstanding his connections, his high birth and his dangerous talents, he could obtain nothing; thereupon he entered into the underground conspiracy which caused the downfall of the Bourbons of the elder branch. When the younger branch, preceded by

the Parisian populace, had trampled upon the elder branch, and was fairly seated on the throne, Maxime once more exploited his attachment to Napoléon, for whom he cared as little as for his first petty love-affair. He rendered important services, which the government was sadly embarrassed to recompense, for he demanded to be paid too frequently by people who knew how to count. At the first refusal Maxime assumed a hostile attitude, threatening to disclose certain unsavory details, for dynasties, when beginning their reign, have soiled swaddling-clothes, like young children.

De Marsay, during his ministry, atoned for the errors of those who had failed to appreciate this worthy's usefulness; he entrusted him with secret missions of the sort that require consciences beaten thin by the hammer of necessity, an address that recoils from no difficulty, impudence, and above all that *sang-froid,* that self-assurance, that keenness of vision which go to make up the *bravi* of thought and of politics. Such instruments are both rare and necessary. De Marsay designedly anchored Maxime de Trailles in the most exalted social circle; he described him as a man ripened by passions, taught by experience, who knew men and things thoroughly, and who had derived from his travels and from a remarkable faculty of observation a close acquaintance with European affairs, with foreign cabinets and with the alliances of all the continental families. De Marsay convinced Maxime of the necessity of proving an honor to his chief; he

depicted discretion to him less as a virtue than as a profitable speculation; he demonstrated to him that the government would never turn its back upon a stout and reliable, fashionable and refined instrument.

"In politics, a man never gets but one chance!" he said to him, blaming him for having indulged in threats.

Maxime was the man to fathom the depth of that remark.

When De Marsay died, Maxime de Trailles relapsed into his former mode of life. Every year he visited the watering-places to gamble and returned to Paris for the winter; but, although he received some considerable sums from the depths of certain exceedingly parsimonious strong boxes, that sort of half-pay, due to the intrepidity of the man who could be employed at any moment and who was in the secret of many mysteries of the counter-diplomacy, was insufficient for the extravagance of an existence so magnificent as that of the king of the dandies, the tyrant of four or five Parisian clubs. Thus Comte Maxime was frequently disturbed in mind concerning the financial question. Owning no real estate, he had not been able to solidify his position by obtaining an election as deputy; and, having no visible functions, it was impossible for him to hold the knife at the throat of any ministry in order to compel his elevation to the dignity of the peerage. Now he found that time was telling upon him, for his reckless life had left its mark upon his

person no less than his varying fortunes. Notwithstanding his fair exterior, he knew himself and could not deceive himself as to his condition; he thought seriously of calling a halt and marrying. Being a man of intelligence he made no mistake as to the consideration in which he was apparently held: he well knew that it was deceptive. Therefore he was not likely to find a wife either in the first society of Paris or in the bourgeoisie; he must needs have a prodigious store of real malevolence and apparent good-fellowship, and have rendered important services to induce the ruling powers to endure him any longer, for everyone desired his fall, and a vein of ill-luck might be his ruin. If he were once sent to the Clichy prison or exiled by virtue of certain inconvenient notes of hand, he would fall into the abyss in which we can see so many political carcasses who have no power of mutual consolation. At that very moment he was in dread of the fall of some portions of that threatening structure which debts erect over more than one Parisian head. He had allowed his anxiety to appear upon his brow, he had declined to play at Madame d'Espard's, he had given evidence of absent-mindedness in talking with the ladies, and he had finally thrown himself back, mute and absorbed in thought, in the easy-chair from which he had just risen like Banquo's ghost.

Comte Maxime de Trailles found that he was the goal of every glance, direct or oblique, planted as he was in the centre of the hearth, and illuminated by the cross-fires of two candelabra. The few words

that had been said concerning him compelled him in some sort to assume a haughty pose, and he bore himself like a man of intelligence, without arrogance, but with the purpose of showing that he was above suspicion. A painter could never have found a better moment to obtain a portrait of that most extraordinary man. Must one not necessarily be endowed with faculties of a rare order to play such a rôle, to have seduced women for thirty years, to determine to employ one's gifts only in an invisible sphere, by inciting a people to rebellion, by stealthily fathoming the secrets of astute politicians, by winning one's triumphs only in boudoirs or in closets? Is there not something indefinably grand in raising one's self to the highest level of politics and falling back into the cold void of a frivolous life? What a man of iron he must be who withstands the varying fortunes of play, the swift changes of politics, the demands of fashion and society, the lavish expenditure of necessary love-affairs, who makes his memory a library of stratagems and lies, who envelops so many diverse thoughts, so many sly manœuvres in an impenetrable refinement of manner! If the wind of favor had filled those sails which were always set, if the turn of events had been favorable to Maxime, he might have been Mazarin, the Maréchal de Richelieu, Potemkin, or perhaps, more exactly, Lauzun, minus Pignerol.

Although he was quite tall and constitutionally spare, the count had acquired something of a paunch, but he kept it within majestic limits, to

employ an expression of Brillat-Savarin. His clothes were always so well made, too, that he preserved in his whole person a youthful air, a suggestion of activity and agility, due doubtless to his constant exercise, to his habits of fencing, riding and hunting. Maxime possessed all the physical graces and advantages of the aristocracy, heightened by his superior dress and carriage. His long face, of a Bourbon cast, was framed by side-whiskers and by a fringe of beard, carefully curled and trimmed according to the prevailing fashion, and as black as jet. The color, like that of his abundant hair, was obtained by the use of a very expensive Indian cosmetic, used in Persia, the secret of which Maxime kept to himself. Thus he deceived even the most experienced eyes concerning the grayish tinge that had long before made itself apparent in his hair. The peculiar property of that dye-stuff, which the Persians used on their beards, is that it does not make the features appear harsh; the shade can be varied by varying the proportion of indigo, and made to harmonize with the color of the skin. It was evidently that operation that Madame Mollot had witnessed; but in certain circles the jest of asking what Madame Mollot saw is still in favor. Maxime had a very fine forehead, blue eyes, a Greek nose, a pleasant mouth and a well-shaped chin; but his eyes were surrounded by numerous lines as fine as if they had been cut with a razor and invisible at a little distance. His temples bore similar marks. The face also was considerably

seamed. The eyes, like those of gamblers who have passed innumerable sleepless nights, were covered as with a layer of varnish; but his glance, although weakened in intensity, was the more terrible therefor; it frightened you, you felt that there was a smouldering fire behind, a lava-flood of passion only partly extinguished. The mouth, formerly so red and moist, also had a cold look; it was no longer straight but was deflected to the right. That peculiarity seemed to indicate falsehood. Vice had twisted those lips; but the teeth were still white and handsome. These blemishes vanished in the general aspect of the face and the person. The outlines were still so fascinating that no younger man could rival Maxime on horseback in the Bois, where he seemed younger and more graceful than the youngest and most graceful of them all.

This privilege of perennial youth was possessed by several men of that time. The count was the more dangerous in that he seemed pliable, indolent, and gave no sign of the terrible determination which governed his course in everything. That ghastly indifference, which made it possible for him to help on a popular uprising as adroitly as he could have carried on a court intrigue, with the object of solidifying the authority of a prince, invested him with a sort of charm. People never distrust a calm, equable manner, especially in France, where we are accustomed to much excitement concerning the smallest matters.

The count was dressed, in accordance with the

fashion of 1839, in a black coat, dark blue cashmere waistcoat, embroidered with small flowers in light blue, black trousers, gray silk stockings and patent leather shoes. His watch, which he carried in a pocket of his waistcoat, was secured by a superb chain passed through one of the buttonholes.

"Rastignac," he said, accepting the cup of tea handed him by pretty Madame de Rastignac, "will you come to the Austrian embassy with me?"

"I am too recently married, my friend, not to go home with my wife."

"That means that later—?" said the young countess, turning to look at her husband.

"Later is the end of the world," rejoined Maxime. "But don't you assure me of success in my suit by making madame the judge?"

The count, with a graceful wave of his hand, led the pretty countess aside; she listened to a few words, glanced at her mother and said to Rastignac:

"If you wish to go with Monsieur de Trailles to the embassy, mother will take me home."

A few moments later the Baronne de Nucingen and the Comtesse de Rastignac left the house together. Maxime and Rastignac soon followed them, and when they were seated in the count's carriage, the newly-married man began:

"What do you want of me, Maxime? What is there so urgent, that you take me by the throat like this? What did you say to my wife?"

"That I had something to say to you," replied

Monsieur de Trailles. "You are a lucky fellow! You have ended by marrying the sole heiress of Nucingen's millions and you well earned her—twenty years of penal servitude!"

"Maxime!"

"But look at me, here am I looked at askance by everybody," he continued, paying no heed to the interruption. "A vile cur, a Du Tillet, wonders if I have the courage to kill myself! It is time for me to settle down. Does the government want to get rid of me or not? You can find out—you shall find out," he said, imposing silence on Rastignac by a gesture. "This is my plan, listen. You ought to help me, for I have helped you and can help you again. The life I am leading wearies me and I want a chance to retire. Come, help me to arrange a marriage that will give me half a million; when I am once married, send me as minister to some paltry American republic. I will stay there as long as I must to justify my appointment to a place of the same sort in Germany. If I am worth anything, you will give me something better; if I am worth nothing, you will thank me for getting out of the way. Perhaps I shall have a son; I shall be very strict with him; his mother will be rich, I'll make a diplomatist of him and perhaps he'll be an ambassador."

"This is my answer," said Rastignac. "There is a conflict, a more bitter conflict than most people imagine, between a certain power in swaddling-clothes and an infant power. The power in swaddling-clothes is the Chamber of Deputies,

which, not being held in check by a hereditary Chamber—"

"Aha!" said Maxime, "you're a peer of France."

"Should I not be by this time under any régime?" said the new peer.—"But don't interrupt me, there's a chance for you in all this muddle. The Chamber of Deputies will inevitably become the whole government, as we were warned by De Marsay, the only man by whom France could have been saved, for nations do not die, they are slaves or freemen, that is all. The infant power is the dynasty crowned in August 1830. The present ministry is beaten, it has dissolved the Chamber and intends to manage the elections so that the succeeding ministry shall not manage them; but it does not expect a victory. If it should be victorious in the elections, the dynasty would be in danger; whereas, if the ministry is whipped, the dynastic party can carry on the struggle advantageously for a long while to come. The errors of the Chamber will turn to the advantage of a will, which unfortunately is everything in politics. When one is the whole government as Napoléon was, there comes a time when one must provide one's self with a substitute, and as the men of superior mould have been alienated, the great whole is unable to find a proper substitute. The substitute is what is called a cabinet, and there is no cabinet in France, there is simply an ephemeral will. In France the party in power alone makes mistakes, the opposition cannot make any; it may lose all the battles it fights, it is

enough if, like the Allies in 1814, it wins a single time. And with *three glorious days* it ruins everything. So that the way to inherit the governing power is to be in opposition and to wait. I belong, so far as my private opinions are concerned, to the aristocracy, and by my public opinions to the dynasty of July. The House of Orléans has assisted me to restore the fortunes of my house, and I am attached to it forever."

"Monsieur de Talleyrand's *forever*, be it understood!" said Maxime.

"At this moment therefore I can do nothing for you," continued Rastignac; "we shall not be in power six months hence. Yes, those six months are going to be a sort of death agony,—I knew it; we knew our fate when we took office, we are simply a stop-gap ministry. But if you distinguish yourself in the electoral battle about to be fought, if you bring one vote, one deputy faithful to the cause of the dynasty, your wish shall be gratified. I can talk about your good intentions, I can put my nose into the secret documents, the confidential reports, and find some hard job for you. If you succeed, I can dwell on your talents, your devotion, and demand the reward. You must find your wife, my dear fellow, in some family of ambitious tradespeople, and in the provinces. You are too well-known in Paris. The main point therefore is to find a millionaire, a parvenu blessed with a daughter and possessed of a desire to make a display at the Château des Tuileries."

"Induce your father-in-law to lend me twenty-five thousand francs to keep me till then; it will be to his interest then to see that I am not paid in court holy water after my success, and he will help on the marriage."

"You're a shrewd fellow, Maxime, you don't trust me; but I like bright men and I'll arrange the affair for you."

They had reached the embassy. The Comte de Rastignac spied the Minister of the Interior in the salon and went and talked with him in a corner. Comte Maxime de Trailles was apparently engaged in conversation with the old Comtesse de Listomère; but he was, in reality, following the interview of the two peers of France; he watched their gestures, he interpreted their expressions, and finally he detected a favorable glance bestowed upon him by the minister. Maxime and Rastignac went away together at one o'clock in the morning, and, before entering their respective carriages, Rastignac said, on the staircase:

"Come to see me when the elections are near at hand. Between now and then I shall find out in what quarter the chances of the opposition are least promising, and what means of action two intellects like ours can find in that quarter."

"The twenty-five thousand francs are urgently needed!" De Trailles replied.

"Very well, keep out of sight."

Seven weeks later, the Comte de Trailles visited Rue de Varenne mysteriously, in a hired cab,

before daybreak. At the door of the house occupied by the Minister of Public Works, he dismissed the cab, looked to see if he were followed, then entered the house and waited in a small salon until Rastignac should appear. A few moments later the servant who had taken Maxime's card ushered him into the bedroom where the statesman was completing his morning toilet.

"My dear fellow," said the minister, "I can tell you a secret which will be disclosed two days hence in the newspapers, and which you can turn to advantage. Poor Charles Keller, who danced the mazurka so well, has been killed in Africa, and he was our candidate in the arrondissement of Arcis. His death leaves a gap. Here are copies of two reports, one from the sub-prefect, the other from the commissioner of police, warning the ministry that our poor friend's candidacy would encounter obstacles. There is information in the commissioner's report concerning the state of the town, which will be sufficient for a man of your adroitness, for the ambition of poor Charles Keller's rival is due to his desire to marry an heiress. That statement is enough for one so quick to understand as you. The Cinq-Cygnes, the Princesse de Cadignan and Georges de Maufrigneuse are within two steps of Arcis; you will find a way to get the legitimist votes if necessary.—And so—"

"Don't tire your tongue," said Maxime. "Is the commissioner of police still there?"

"Yes."

"Just give me a line for him."

"My dear fellow," said Rastignac, handing Maxime a whole bundle of papers, "you will find there two letters to Gondreville for you. You have been a page and he a senator, so you will understand each other. Madame François Keller is very pious, here is a letter for her from the Maréchale de Carigliano. The maréchale has come over to the dynasty, she recommends you warmly and will join you there, too. I will add but one word: be shy of the sub-prefect, whom I believe to be capable of manœuvring to make use of this Simon Giguet to say a good word for him to the ex-President of the Council. If you need letters, authority, recommendations, write to me."

"And the twenty-five thousand francs?" queried Maxime.

"Sign this note to Du Tillet's order, here's the money."

"I shall succeed," said the count, "and you can promise the people at the château that the Deputy from Arcis will belong to them, body and soul. If I fail, let them throw me over!"

An hour later Maxime de Trailles was in his tilbury on the road to Troyes.

Once in possession of the information furnished by the hostess of *Le Mulet* and by Antonin Goulard, the sub-prefect, Monsieur de Trailles soon laid out his electoral plan of campaign, and that plan suggests itself too readily for the reader not to have foreseen it already. The adroit agent of private

politics abruptly set up the candidacy of Philéas in opposition to the candidacy of Simon Giguet; and, despite the absolute nullity and incongruousness of his man, it must be admitted that that combination had an excellent chance of success. Being a well-known figure to the great majority of indifferent electors, because of the municipal halo, Beauvisage had a tremendous advantage at the start: his name was a household word among them. Logic presides over the conduct of earthly things much more than it seems to do; it is like the wife to whom one constantly returns after many infidelities.

Common sense would seem to require that, being called upon to select a representative of the public interests, the electors should always be perfectly well informed concerning his fitness, his uprightness, his character. Too often, in practice, that theory is terribly distorted, beyond question; but whenever the electoral flock, being left to its instinctive understanding of its duties, can persuade itself that it is voting by the use of its own intelligence and its own information, we may be sure of seeing it exhibit abundant energy and self-esteem in making up its mind: is it not an excellent beginning, electorally speaking, when the important point is to know a man, to know at least what his name is?

Passing from the indifferent electors to those most deeply interested, Philéas was assured in the first place of the support of the Gondreville party. When it was a matter of chastising Simon Giguet's presumption, what candidate would not have been

supported by the *Vice-roi of Arcis?* The nomination of a man who had placed himself in an attitude of flagrant hostility and ingratitude toward him, was one of those assaults upon his provincial eminence, which must be turned aside at any cost. But at the first news that reached Grévin, his father-in-law, of his parliamentary ambition, Beauvisage was greeted with an amazement that was neither flattering nor encouraging. The ex-notary had gauged his son-in-law once for all, and the thought of Philéas as a statesman produced upon his eminently fair and acute mind something of the disagreeable effect produced upon the ear by a sudden ill-arranged discord. Moreover, if it is truly said that no prophet is honored in his own country, it seems to be even more true of his family, where an acknowledgment of the most undeniable success continues to be a matter of dispute long after it has ceased to be mentioned in public. But, when the first shock had passed, Grévin eventually became acclimated to the idea of an expedient which, after all, adapted itself very well to his plans for Séverine's future. And then, what sacrifice would he not have made for the salvation of the Gondreville influence, so seriously threatened?

To the legitimist and republican parties, neither of which could cut any figure in the election except to turn the scale in case the result was very close, Monsieur de Trailles' candidate commended himself for a strange reason—to-wit his well-understood unfitness. Realizing that they were not strong enough

to choose a deputy of their own selection, the two factions of the anti-dynastic opposition would embrace with ardor an opportunity to make a nick in what they contemptuously called *the existing order of things*, and they could be depended upon, in their joyful despair, to strive with all their heart for the success of a candidate so resplendent with absurdity that a broad beam would shine from him upon the government that had given him its support. And lastly, in the ranks of the Left Centre, which had provisionally adopted Simon Giguet as its candidate, Beauvisage was in a fair way to cause a serious schism, for he too held himself out as belonging to the dynastic opposition, and, until further orders, while assuring him of the aid of the ministerial influence, Monsieur de Trailles proposed to have him retain that political hue, which was unquestionably the most popular in the neighborhood in which they were carrying on operations. But whatever luggage in the way of opinions the incorruptible representative might carry to Paris, his horoscope was cast: they could be assured that, upon his first appearance at the Tuileries, the slightest notice from an august personage would make of him a fanatic, even if the simple coils of the ministerial blandishments had not already had that effect.

The public interest being thus provided for, there remained for the electoral broker, the personal question: to ascertain, that is to say, if he could find enough material left over after making the deputy to fashion a father-in-law. The first point,

the dowry; the second point, the daughter, both were satisfactory to him: the one without dazzling him; the other without any self-deception as to the imperfections of a provincial education which he would have to make over from beginning to end, but which was not likely to offer any serious resistance to his cunning conjugal pedagogy. At one swoop, Madame Beauvisage would carry away her husband; she was an ambitious creature who, although she had passed forty-four, still had the air of feeling her heart beat. His best game perhaps was to begin the fire of a feigned attack upon her, then turn it upon the daughter. How far could he go in taking possession of the advanced works? that was a question to be answered according to circumstances. In any event Maxime felt sure that his title was a powerful recommendation with the two women, to begin with, as well as his reputation as a man of fashion and his masterly aptitude for initiating them into all the incomprehensible and refined mysteries of Parisian life; in short, as the author of Beauvisage's political fortune, which promised such a blessed revolution in the lives of the two Champenois exiles, might not Monsieur de Trailles anticipate the warmest gratitude on their part? He was confronted, however, by one serious obstacle in his matrimonial campaign. It was necessary to obtain the sanction of Grévin, who was not the man to assent to Cécile's marriage without first informing himself thoroughly as to the whole of the suitor's past. Now, when that investigation had

been made, was it not to be feared that the tempestuous biography of a rake of fifty would not present the sum total of securities and proprieties which the punctilious old man in his prudence might demand?

In the governmental mission, so to speak, with which Monsieur de Trailles was entrusted at Arcis, might be discovered evidence of a gravity of character and an amendment of his ways which would go far to offset the effect of certain items of information. By inducing Gondreville, before the nature of that mission was noised abroad, to confide it to Grévin under the most solemn injunctions of secrecy, the old notary's self-love would be flattered and he would be more inclined to look upon Maxime with consideration. Furthermore Maxime had decided, under those difficult circumstances, to resort to the very ancient device attributed to Gribouille, which consists in throwing one's self into the water to avoid getting wet. Anticipating the old notary's suspicions, he had planned that he himself should appear to be distrustful of his own virtue, and, by way of precaution against the possible influence of his old habits, he proposed to ask that the marriage contract should include an express provision that the parties should continue to enjoy their separate property. In that way they would consider themselves quite safe against any relapse into his former extravagant ways. As for him, it would be his business to acquire sufficient dominion over his young wife to regain, by the power of

sentiment, that share of the authority of a husband of which the contract would have divested him.

At first nothing occurred to cast doubt upon the wisdom and keen-sightedness of all these ideas. Beauvisage's candidacy, as soon as it was suggested, having taken fire like a train of powder, Monsieur de Trailles, in view of the success of all his efforts, deemed the chances so promising, that he considered himself justified in writing to Rastignac and informing him of the complete and successful execution of his mission. But suddenly Beauvisage the triumphant found himself confronted by an opposing candidate, and, be it said in passing, luckily for our narrative, this competition began under conditions so exceptional and so unforeseen, that it might well substitute for the description at first anticipated of the petty accidents of an electoral struggle, the interest of a much more thrilling drama.

The man who appears upon the stage of this history, entrusted with so exalted a mission, is destined to play so important a part therein that it becomes necessary to fix his place by retrospective explanations of some length. But to suspend the onward march of the narrative without warning, by a tardy explanation, at the point at which we have now arrived, would be contrary to all the rules of art and would expose us to the wrath of the critic, that devoted policeman of literary orthodoxy. In presence of that difficulty, the author would have been sadly embarrassed had not his lucky star placed at

his disposal a correspondence wherein are collected and set forth, with a vigor and animation he could never have imparted to them, all the details which it becomes indispensable to place before the eyes of the reader. These letters should be read with care. While bringing upon the stage many familiar actors in the HUMAN COMEDY, they give a multitude of facts necessary to the understanding of the conclusion of the present drama. When they have been transcribed and the narrative brought down to the point at which we seem to abandon it to-day, it will of itself, and without the slightest shock, resume its course, and we take pleasure in persuading ourselves that, from the temporary introduction of the epistolary form, its unity, which may seem to be disturbed for a moment, will prove to have derived naught but profit.

PART SECOND

INSTRUCTIVE LETTERS

INSTRUCTIVE LETTERS

*

COMTE DE L'ESTORADE TO MARIE-GASTON*

DEAR MONSIEUR,

In accordance with your wish, I have seen Monsieur le Préfet de Police, in order to ascertain if the pious purpose which you mention in your letter to me from Carrara would meet with any opposition from the authorities. Monsieur le Préfet replied that the imperial decree of the 23d Prairial, year XII, by which the whole subject of burials is still regulated, sets forth in most unequivocal terms the right of every person to use his own property as a place of interment. It will suffice for you therefore to provide yourself with a permit at the prefecture of Seine-et-Oise, and you will then be at liberty, without other formality, to transport the mortal remains of Madame Marie-Gaston to the monument which you propose to erect to her memory in your park at Ville-d'Avray. And now I will venture to offer some objections on my own account. Are you quite sure that you will not meet with some opposition on the part of the Chaulieus, with whom you are not on the best of terms? Indeed, would they

*See *Memoirs of Two Young Wives.*

not be justified, up to a certain point, in complaining that, by removing from the public cemetery to private, enclosed property a body which is dear to them as well as to you, you assert an absolute right to regulate, according to your good pleasure, such visits as they may desire to make to the place of sepulture? for, it is clear that you will always be at liberty to forbid their entering upon your property. I am well aware that, applying the law strictly, the wife, be she dead or alive, belongs to the husband, to the exclusion of her own kindred, even those who are nearest to her; but suppose that, under the impulsion of the ill-will of which they have already given you more proofs than one, Madame Marie-Gaston's relatives should conceive the deplorable idea of carrying their opposition into the courts—what a painful subject of discussion it would be! I do not doubt that you would win the suit, for the Duc de Chaulieu's influence is no longer what it was under the Restoration; but have you thought of all the poison that an advocate's tongue might emit upon such a question, when, after all, he will simply echo a perfectly justifiable claim, the claim of a father, a mother and two brothers that they be not dispossessed of the sorrowful happiness of praying over a coffin? Furthermore, if I must tell you the whole of my thought, I cannot without the keenest regret observe that you are intent upon furnishing new nourishment to your grief, which has been too long inconsolable.

We had hoped that after two years in Italy, you

would return more resigned, and that you would at last make up your mind to look to a life of activity for some of its sources of distraction. Evidently this species of temple which you propose to erect to your fervent memories, in a spot where they are already only too numerous and insistent, can have no other result than to perpetuate their bitterness, and I am unable to applaud you for undertaking thus to regenerate them. However, as one must serve one's friends to some extent in their manner, I did your errand to Monsieur Dorlange; but, I must hasten to tell you, I found him in no wise eager to enter into your idea. His first words, when I introduced myself to him as coming in your behalf, were that he had not the honor of your acquaintance, and that reply, strange as it may sound to your ears, was given in such a natural way, that at first I thought that there must have been some mistake due to a similarity of names. However, as your forgetful friend was pleased to admit a little later that he had received his education at the college at Tours, and as, still by his own confession, he proved to be the self-same Monsieur Dorlange who, in 1831, under very exceptional circumstances, won the grand prize in sculpture, I could no longer doubt his identity. I thereupon explained his failure of memory to my own mind by the long interruption in your relations, of which you yourself had told me. Your conduct must have wounded him much more deeply than you imagined, and when he pretended to have forgotten all about you, even to

your name, it was simply that he had an opportunity for revenge which he was not sorry to grasp. But that is not the real obstacle.

As I recalled the fraternal intimacy that had existed between you at an earlier period, I could not believe that Monsieur Dorlange's ill-will was inexorable. And so, after setting forth the nature of the work with which it was proposed to entrust him, I was preparing to enter into some explanations concerning the grievances that he might cherish against you, when I suddenly found myself confronted by a difficulty of the most unforeseen description.

"*Mon Dieu*," said he, "the importance of the commission you are kind enough to offer me, the assurance that no pains or expense are to be spared to assure the grandeur and perfection of the work, the request that I go to Carrara to superintend in person the choice and cutting of the marble—all these constitute a genuine bit of artistic good fortune, and at another time I should have accepted with the utmost eagerness. But at this moment, when I have the honor of receiving you, although I have not as yet definitely determined to abandon the career of art, I am perhaps on the point of entering political life. My friends are urging me to come forward as a candidate at the approaching elections, and you will understand, monsieur, that, if I should be elected, the complications of my parliamentary duties and my introduction to an entirely new mode of life would, for a long time at least, prove an

obstacle to my undertaking the work of which you speak with the necessary singleness of purpose. Moreover," added Monsieur Dorlange, "I should have to deal with a great sorrow, which seeks, by this projected monument, to obtain comfort at great expense. That sorrow would naturally be impatient; I should be slow, distraught, preoccupied; the better way, therefore, would be to apply elsewhere; which fact will not prevent my being, as I must needs be, grateful for the confidence manifested in me, and highly honored by it."

After this little *speech*, which was, as you see, very well turned, and by which it seemed to me that your friend was rehearsing, a little too complacently perhaps, for his future triumphs in the tribune, I thought for a moment of suggesting the hypothesis of his failure as a candidate, and of asking him if, in that case, it would not be well for us to apply to him again. But it is never courteous to cast doubt upon an electoral triumph, and as I was in the presence of a man whose feelings were very bitter, I did not choose, by an inquisitiveness that might be taken in bad part, to run the risk of throwing oil on the flames. I contented myself therefore with expressing my regret and saying that I would inform you of the result of my errand. It is needless to add that within a few days I shall know what to think as to the result of this parliamentary ambition which we have so inopportunely encountered on our road. Personally, I have a thousand reasons for thinking that this candidacy is a mere

blind. In that view, perhaps you would do well to write to Monsieur Dorlange; for his whole attitude, while perfectly polite and seemly, seemed to me to denote that he still has a very vivid recollection of apparent grievances for which you will have to obtain his forgiveness. I know that it may wound your sensitive feelings to explain the sequence of the truly exceptional circumstances under which your marriage took place; for that very process will require you to review your days of happiness, which have now become for you days of such painful memories. But, judging from what I could see of your former friend's disposition toward you, if you are extremely desirous that he should give you the benefit of his talent, to refrain from urging your desire yourself and to act further by proxy, would be to continue a course of action which has already seemed to him ungracious, and to invite a further refusal. After that, if the step I urge you to take should prove to be decidedly beyond your strength, there may be still another method. In every matter in which I have ever known her to take a hand, Madame de l'Estorade has seemed to me to be a clever negotiator; but, in this particular case, I should have absolute confidence in her intervention. She herself was compelled to put up with outbreaks of selfish passions on the part of Madame Marie-Gaston very similar to the treatment by which Monsieur Dorlange feels aggrieved. So that she would be better fitted than anybody to explain to him the imperious impulses of that absorbing conjugal

life in which you enveloped yourself so closely, and it would seem to me very extraordinary if the forbearance and indulgence which she always exhibited to her whom she called *her dear stray lamb*, should not prove contagious for your friend.

You have, however, plenty of leisure to think what use you will prefer to make of this opening. Madame de l'Estorade is still suffering at this moment from a serious indisposition, the result of a maternal fright. A week ago our dear little Naïs came within an ace of being crushed to death before her eyes, and had it not been for the courageous intervention of a stranger who threw himself at the horses' heads and stopped them short, God knows by what a frightful disaster we should have been stricken. The effect of that terrible shock upon Madame de l'Estorade was a nervous crisis which caused us serious alarm for a short time. Although she is much better to-day, it will still be several days before she will be in a condition to receive Monsieur Dorlange, assuming that her feminine mediation strikes you as desirable and likely to be of use. But I ask you once more, monsieur, would it not be better to abandon your idea altogether? An enormous outlay, unpleasant clashing with the Chaulieus, and a renewing of your own grief: these are what I anticipate. Which does not signify, however, that I do not continue to be at your service in everything and for every purpose, as my esteem and friendship for you require.

COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME OCTAVE DE CAMPS

Paris, February, 1839.

DEAR MADAME,

Of all the expressions of sympathy called forth by the terrible accident to my poor child, not one has touched me so deeply as your kind letter. In reply to your affectionate solicitude, I ought to say that Naïs was marvelously calm and cool throughout the horrible affair. It is not possible, I think, to see death closer at hand; but the brave little girl did not move an eyebrow either before or after the occurrence, and everything about her indicates a most resolute character; likewise, thank God! there is not the slightest symptom of disturbance in her general health. As for myself, I was thrown into convulsions by my unspeakable terror, and for several days I seem to have alarmed the doctor, who for a short time feared for my reason. Thanks to the strength of my constitution, I am now almost recovered, and no trace would remain of that cruel excitement, were it not that, by a strange fatality, it linked itself to another unpleasant source of pre-occupation which had thought fit to take up its abode in my life some time before.

Even before the renewed assurance you so kindly offer me of your feeling for me, which I already knew to be most friendly, I had thought of seeking the assistance of your friendship and your counsel; to-day, when you write me that you

should be happy and proud if you could hope to remind me, even in the slightest degree, of poor Louise de Chaulieu, the dear and incomparable friend of whom death has robbed me, how can I hesitate? I take you at your word, dear madame, and the exquisite adroitness which formerly assisted you to baffle the comments of fools, when the impossibility of announcing your marriage to Monsieur de Camps left you at the mercy of insolent and treacherous curiosity—see *Madame Firmiani—;* the extraordinary tact which you displayed at that time in extricating yourself from a situation in which all was embarrassment and danger; and, lastly, the marvelous art that enabled you, while keeping your secret, to retain all your womanly dignity,—all these I earnestly beseech you to place at the service of that preoccupation of which I spoke a moment ago. Unfortunately, in order to obtain the doctor's advice, one must describe the disease, and it is in that connection that Monsieur de Camps, with his mechanical genius, seems to me a wicked man. Thanks to those wretched iron furnaces, which he conceived the idea of purchasing, behold you are almost dead to Paris and to society. Formerly, when I had you here, under my hand, I could have told you everything, without preparation, without embarrassment, in a quarter of an hour's chat; to-day I must make up my mind to arrange my thoughts in logical order, in a word, to observe all the solemn forms of a written confidence.

But, after all, perhaps it would be better to attack

the matter boldly, and as I must come to it at last, after all my preambles and circumlocutions, why not frankly admit that the subject of my perplexity is the stranger by whom my poor, dear child was rescued. Stranger!—Let us understand each other: a stranger to Monsieur de l'Estorade; a stranger to everyone who can possibly have mentioned the accident to you; a stranger, if you choose, to the whole world, but not to your humble servant, whom, for three months past, that man has deigned to honor with the most persistent attentions. The idea that, at thirty-two years, mother of three children, one a tall boy of fifteen, I could become the object of a passionate attachment, will seem no more improbable to you than it seems to me, dear madame, and yet that is the absurd and unfortunate fact against which I have to defend myself to-day. And when I say that this stranger is known to me, I must make another distinction: for I know neither his name nor his place of abode nor anything about him, for I have never met him in society; and I may add that, although he wears the ribbon of the Legion of Honor, there is nothing in his appearance, utterly devoid of refinement as it is, that leads me to think that I am ever likely to meet him there.

It was at the church of Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, where, as you know, I used to go every day to hear mass, that this tiresome persecution began to take shape. Almost every day too, I used to take my children to walk at the Tuileries, Monsieur de l'Estorade having installed us in a house with no

garden. That habit, soon noted, encouraged my persecutor to renewed activity, and I had to resign myself to the certainty of finding him in my path wherever it was possible to meet me outside of my own house. I noticed, by the way, that this singular suitor, being as prudent as audacious, always avoided attending me to my own door, and he manœuvred at a sufficient distance and with sufficient discretion to enable me to cherish at all events the consoling assurance that his absurd assiduity could not have attracted the notice of any of those persons who happened to be with me. But God alone knows the sacrifices and restraints I imposed upon myself, in order to throw him off the scent! The church has seen me on Sundays only; I have often kept my dear children in the house, endangering their health, or have invented excuses for not accompanying them; and, contrary to all my principles of education and prudence, I have left them to the care of servants. Calls, shopping, I have done nothing, I have gone nowhere except in my carriage; all of which did not prevent my troublesome admirer, just as I had concluded that I had baffled him and worn out his patience, from being at hand to play such a noble and providential part in the accident that happened to Naïs. But, frankly, is not the great burden of indebtedness to him which I must henceforth bear, a deplorable complication in an already embarrassing situation? If I had really been annoyed beyond endurance by his persistence, I could have cut his attentions short by

some means or other, by violent measures if necessary; but now, if he appears in my path, how am I to act? what course am I to adopt with him? Speak to him and thank him? But in that case I encourage him, and, even if he should not try to take advantage of my act to change the nature of our relations, it is perfectly clear that I should sew him to my skirts more firmly than ever. Shall I, then, refrain from speaking to him and seem not to recognize him? But just think, madame, a mother! a mother who owes her daughter's life to him and who seems not to be conscious of it and has not a word of gratitude for him!

That, however, is the intolerable alternative that confronts me, and you can judge now whether I need the advice of your wisdom! What must I do to put an end to the unpleasant practice this gentleman has adopted of being my shadow? How can I thank him without overexciting his imagination, or avoid thanking him without having to endure countless rebukes from my conscience? Such is the problem submitted to your wisdom. If you will do me the favor of solving it for me—and I know no one who is more capable of so doing—I shall have to add my gratitude to all the affectionate sentiments with which, dear madame, you know my heart to be already filled.

COMTE DE L'ESTORADE TO MARIE-GASTON

Paris, February, 1839.

It may be, dear monsieur, that the public journals

will anticipate me in telling you of a meeting that has taken place between your friend, Monsieur Dorlange, and the Duc de Rhétoré. But, by announcing the bare fact, for custom and propriety do not permit them to go into the causes of the quarrel at length, the newspapers will simply arouse your curiosity without satisfying it. Luckily I have learned all the details of the affair from a very trustworthy source, and I hasten to transmit them to you; they are calculated to interest you to the highest degree.

Three days ago, that is to say in the evening of the same day on which I called on Monsieur Dorlange, the Duc de Rhétoré occupied an orchestra stall at the Opéra. Monsieur de Ronquerolles, recently returned from a diplomatic mission that has kept him away from Paris several years, sat beside him. During the entr'acte those gentlemen did not go to the foyer; but, as is frequently done in the theatre, they stood up with their backs to the stage, and consequently facing Monsieur Dorlange, who was sitting behind them and seemed deeply engrossed in reading the evening paper. There had been that day a most scandalous session, what is called an interesting session of the Chamber of Deputies. Conversation having turned naturally enough to those events in Parisian society which had happened during Monsieur de Ronquerolles's absence, he made this remark, which naturally aroused Monsieur Dorlange's attention:

"What! that poor Madame de Macumer, such a sad end and such an extraordinary marriage!"

"Oh!" replied Monsieur de Rhétoré in his usual high-pitched voice, "my sister had too vivid an imagination not to be a little fanciful and romantic. She had loved Monsieur de Macumer, her first husband, passionately; but one tires of everything after a while, even of widowhood. This Monsieur Marie-Gaston fell in her way. He is agreeable enough physically; my sister was rich, he deeply in debt; so he made himself agreeable and attentive in proportion, and on my word! the rascal played his cards so well that after succeeding Monsieur de Macumer and killing his wife with jealousy, he extorted from the poor doting creature all that the law allowed her to dispose of. Louise's property amounted to at least twelve hundred thousand francs, to say nothing of magnificent furniture and a lovely little villa she built at Ville d'Avray. Half of the inheritance fell to my gentleman, the other half to the Duc and Duchesse de Chaulieu, my father and mother, who were legally entitled to that portion. As for my brother Lenoncourt and myself, our share was disherison, pure and simple."

As soon as your name was mentioned, dear monsieur, Monsieur Dorlange put down his paper; and when Monsieur de Rhétoré had finished his remarks, he rose and said to him:

"Excuse me, Monsieur le Duc, if I venture to interpose in this matter; but I am bound in conscience to say to you that you are as utterly misinformed as it is possible to be."

"I beg your pardon?" said the duke, screwing up

his eyes and speaking in the supremely contemptuous tones which you can imagine.

"I say, Monsieur le Duc, that Marie-Gaston is an old playmate of mine, that he has never been considered a *rascal*, that he is, on the contrary, a most honorable and talented man, and that, far from having caused his wife's death of jealousy, he made her perfectly happy during the three years of their married life. As for the inheritance—"

"Have you reflected upon the result of this performance of yours?" demanded the Duc de Rhétoré, interrupting him.

"I have, monsieur, and I repeat, as to the property inherited by Marie-Gaston by virtue of his wife's wish solemnly expressed in her testament, he was so little desirous of it that, to my certain knowledge, he is on the point of expending two to three hundred thousand francs in the erection of a monument to her for whom he has never ceased to weep."

"Why, monsieur, who then are you?" the Duc de Rhétoré again interposed, with an impatience which he found it more and more difficult to control.

"I shall have the honor to tell you in a moment," replied Monsieur Dorlange; "but you will allow me to add that Madame Marie-Gaston could dispose of this property, of which you have received no share, without the slightest remorse; her whole fortune came to her from her first husband, Monsieur de Macumer; and before that she had relinquished her claim to a share in her father's property to set up

an establishment for monsieur your brother, the Duc de Lenoncourt-Givry, who, being a younger son, had not, like yourself, monsieur, the good fortune to be preferred to his brothers and sisters."

With that, Monsieur Dorlange felt in his pocket for his card case, which was not there.

"I have no card with me," he said at last; "but my name is Dorlange, a comedy name, easy to remember, 42 Rue de l'Ouest."

"Not a very central quarter," observed Monsieur de Rhétoré ironically.

At the same time he turned to Monsieur de Ronquerolles and said to him, thus constituting him one of his seconds:

"I beg your pardon, my dear fellow, for sending you on the voyage of discovery you will have to undertake for me to-morrow morning."

He added, almost in the same breath:

"Are you coming to the foyer? we can talk there more quietly and above all more *safely*."

From his manner of emphasizing the last word it was impossible to misunderstand the insulting meaning he intended to impart to it. When the two noblemen had left the hall, the scene having caused no commotion because most of the surrounding stalls were unoccupied during the entr'acte, Monsieur Dorlange saw Monsieur Stidmann, the famous sculptor, at the other end of the orchestra. He went up to him and asked him:

"Do you happen to have a note-book or pocket memorandum with you?"

"Yes, always."

"Will you lend it to me and allow me to tear out a leaf? An idea has just come into my mind that I should not like to lose. If I don't find you at the end of the play to return it to you, it shall be at your house to-morrow morning without fail."

Returning to his seat, Monsieur Dorlange sketched something in haste, and when the curtain rose and Messieurs de Rhétoré and de Ronquerolles resumed their places, he touched the duke lightly on the shoulder and passed him his sketch.

"My card," said he, "which I have the honor to present to your lordship."

The card was a charming sketch of a piece of monumental architecture framed by a landscape. Beneath it was written: *Plan of a monument to be erected to the memory of Madame Marie-Gaston, née Chaulieu, by her husband, after designs by Charles Dorlange, sculptor, Rue de l'Ouest, 42.* It would have been impossible to inform Monsieur de Rhétoré in a more delicate way that he had to do with a worthy adversary, and you will notice, furthermore, my dear monsieur, that Monsieur Dorlange thus found a way to emphasize his contradiction, by giving body, so to speak, to his assertion concerning your disinterestedness and the sincerity of your conjugal sorrow.

The performance came to an end without further incident. Monsieur de Rhétoré and Monsieur de Ronquerolles separated. The latter thereupon accosted Monsieur Dorlange with much courtesy,

and, with a view of effecting an accommodation, he called his attention to the fact that, even though he might be in the right as to his facts, his conduct had been offensive and unusual; that Monsieur de Rhétoré had certainly shown great forbearance, and that he certainly would be content with the slightest expression of regret; in short, he said all that can be said on such an occasion. Monsieur Dorlange would listen to nothing that resembled an apology, and the next day he received a visit from Monsieur de Ronquerolles and General de Montriveau on behalf of Monsieur de Rhétoré. Again Monsieur Dorlange was urged to put his statements in some different form. But your friend adhered to this ultimatum:

"Will Monsieur de Rhétoré withdraw the words which I felt called upon to take up? in that case, I will withdraw mine."

"But that is impossible," they remonstrated. "Monsieur de Rhétoré is personally insulted; you are not. Rightly or wrongly, he is convinced that Monsieur Marie-Gaston has done him a wrong. We ought always to be indulgent to wounded self-interests; we never can obtain absolute justice from them."

"The result being," rejoined Monsieur Dorlange, "that Monsieur le duc will continue to slander my friend at his pleasure: in the first place, because Marie-Gaston is in Italy, and in the second place, because he will always be extremely reluctant to go to extremes with his wife's brother. It is," he

added, "his comparative helplessness to defend himself that makes it my right, yes, my duty, to intervene. It must have been by a special dispensation of Providence that I was at hand to seize on the wing some of the wicked reports that are being circulated secretly, and since Monsieur le Duc de Rhétoré does not choose to modify his statements in any way, we will go on with the affair to the end, if you please."

As discussion was powerless to change these terms, the duel became inevitable, and during the day the conditions were arranged between the seconds of the two parties. The meeting was appointed for the next day, pistols being the weapons selected. On the ground Monsieur Dorlange was perfectly cool and self-possessed. After they had exchanged one shot without result, the seconds suggested putting an end to the combat.

"Nonsense, one more shot!" he said gayly, as if it were a matter of firing at manikins in a shooting-gallery.

At the second shot he was wounded in the fleshy part of the thigh, the wound being in reality not at all dangerous but causing him to lose much blood. While they were taking him to the carriage that had brought him to the ground, as Monsieur de Rhétoré, who was most zealous in his attentions, happened to be close at hand, he said:

"This does not prove that Marie-Gaston is not a man of honor and a heart of gold."

And the next moment he fainted.

This duel, as you can imagine, dear monsieur, has made a tremendous noise, and I have had to do nothing more than listen, to gather an abundance of information concerning Monsieur Dorlange, for he was the lion of the hour throughout the day yesterday, and it was impossible to enter a house without finding him on the carpet. I reaped the bulk of my harvest at Madame de Montcornet's; she receives many artists and men of letters, as you know, and, to give you an idea of the position your friend occupies, I will simply report a conversation at which I was present last evening in the countess's salon. Those who took part were Monsieur Emile Blondet of the *Débats*, Monsieur Bixiou, the caricaturist, one of the best-informed ferrets of Paris; both of them, I think, are acquaintances of yours, but at all events I am sure of your intimacy with Joseph Bridau, our great painter, who took the third part in that conversation, for I remember that he and Daniel d'Arthez were the witnesses at your marriage.

"Dorlange's first works," Joseph Bridau was saying, as I approached to listen, "were magnificent. There were indications of the great master in the work he entered in the competition in sculpture, to which the Academy, under the pressure of public opinion, decided to award the prize, although it had poked fun at his programme with much zest."

"True," added Monsieur Bixiou; "and the *Pandora* he exhibited in 1837, on his return from Rome, is also a very remarkable figure. But as it

brought him everything at one stroke, the cross, orders from the government and the city, and thirty or more amazing articles in the newspapers, it seemed to me that he would find it very hard to recover from that triumph."

"That," said Emile Blondet, "is an opinion à la Bixiou."

"Undoubtedly, and well-founded, too. Do you know the man?"

"No; one meets him nowhere."

"Exactly; that is the place he most frequents. He's a bear, but a bear by design, a pretentious and deliberative bear."

"I do not consider," said Joseph Bridau, "that unsociability is a very bad disposition for an artist. What has a sculptor of all people to gain in salons, where gentlemen and ladies have adopted the habit of appearing fully clad?"

"In the first place a sculptor finds diversion in salons, which prevents his becoming a monomaniac or dreamer; and then he learns there how the world is made, and that 1839 is neither the 15th nor the 16th century."

"What's that?" said Emile Blondet, "does the poor fellow have such illusions as that?"

"Does he? he'll talk to you glibly about living the lives of the great artists of the Middle Ages with the universality of their studies and their knowledge, and that horrible life of toil, of which the customs of a half-barbarous society will give you some idea, but which ours no longer allows. He does not observe,

the artless dreamer, that civilization, by introducing strange complications into social relations absorbs thrice as much time for business, for selfish interests, for pleasure, as a less advanced society expends for the same objects. Look at the savage in his cabin —he has nothing to do! But we, with the Bourse, the opera, newspapers, parliamentary debates, salons, elections, railroads, the Café de Paris and the National Guard—at what moment of the day, I pray to know, are we to work?"

"A most excellent, sluggard's theory!" laughed Emile Blondet.

"Why no, my dear fellow, I am in the right. The curfew, deuce take it! no longer rings at nine o'clock, and last night even my concierge Ravenouillet had an evening party—See *The Involuntary Comedians—;* it may be that I made a boorish mistake by declining the indirect invitation he gave me to be present."

"However," said Joseph Bridau, "it is evident that if one doesn't meddle with the business, nor the private affairs nor the pleasures of his age, he will eventually have a very neat little capital in the way of time saved. Independently of his orders Dorlange has some little property of his own, I believe; so there is no reason why he shouldn't arrange his life as he chooses."

"But you see he goes to the Opéra, as it was there he picked up his duel! You make a great mistake, too, when you represent him as holding aloof from all contact with contemporary environment,

for I happen to know that he is on the point of connecting himself with it by the noisiest and most absorbing mechanism of the social machine, to-wit, political interest!"

"He proposes to become a politician, does he?" said Emile Blondet scornfully.

"Doubtless that enters into his famous programme of universality, and we must see how logically and persistently he carries out the idea! Last year two hundred and fifty thousand francs fell into his lap from the sky, and my man at once purchases a hovel on Rue Saint-Martin in order to provide himself with the necessary electoral qualification; and then he made another pretty little speculation: with the rest of the money he became a shareholder in the newspaper, *Le National*, where I meet him whenever the fancy takes me to go and have a laugh at the republican Utopia. He has his flatterers there; they have persuaded him that he's a born orator and would produce the greatest effect in the Chamber. They are already talking of finding a seat for him, and in their moments of enthusiasm they go so far as to discover a distant resemblance to Danton."

"That is the merest burlesque," said Emile Blondet.

I do not know if you have noticed, my dear monsieur, that men of genuine talent have always a great store of indulgence for everybody. At that point Joseph Bridau furnished a proof of what I say.

"I agree with you," he said, "that if Dorlange

starts upon that path he is well-nigh lost to art. But, after all, why should he not succeed in the Chamber? He expresses himself with great facility and seems to me to have an abundance of ideas at his disposal. Look at Canalis; when he was chosen deputy, everybody said: 'Pshaw! a poet!'—which did not prevent his making a great name as an orator and becoming a minister."

"But the first thing is, to get into the Chamber," said Emile Blondet; "where does Dorlange expect to stand?"

"For one of the *National's* rotten boroughs, naturally. I don't know however that the particular college of electors is selected as yet."

"As a general rule," said the publicist of the *Débats*, "to obtain a seat in the Chamber, even with the warmest support of a party, one must have considerable political notoriety or, at least, something substantial in the way of fortune or family, somewhere in the provinces. Is Dorlange known to have any of those elements of success?"

"Substantiality in the matter of family would be an especially formidable obstacle to him, for, in his case, family is lacking to a desperate degree."

"Really," said Blondet; "is he a natural child?"

"As natural as a child can be, father and mother both unknown. But I prefer to think, for my part, that he will be elected; the procession of his political ideas will be a curiosity!"

"He must be a republican, if he's a friend of messieurs of *Le National* and looks like Danton."

"Undoubtedly, but he has a sovereign contempt for his co-religionists, saying that they are good for nothing but feats of strength, violence and making a great noise with their mouths. Provisionally therefore he would have a monarchy encompassed by republican institutions; but he asserts that our citizen royalty must inevitably be destroyed by the abuse of court influence, which he bluntly calls corruption. That would lead him to make overtures to the little church of the Left Centre; but there again—for there are always *buts*—he sees nothing but a collection of ambitious men and eunuchs, unwittingly smoothing the way for a revolution which he sees rising above the horizon, with the greatest regret so far as he is concerned, because, he says, the masses are too ill prepared and too unintelligent not to let it escape from their hands. He laughs at legitimacy; he refuses to admit that it is a principle entitled to any consideration. To his mind it is simply a more definite and more perfect form of hereditary monarchy, and he accords it no other superiority than that of old wine to new. At the same time that he is not a legitimist, not a conservative, not a partisan of the Left Centre, and is a republican without desiring a republic, he poses courageously as a Catholic, and he rides the hobby-horse of that party, liberty of education; but this same man, who desires free education, is, on the other hand, afraid of the Jesuits, and he still harps, as they did in 1829, on the encroachments of the party of the priesthood and the congregation. In

fine, do you know the great party that he proposes to form in the Chamber, and to be the leader of? The party of justice, of impartiality, of honesty; as if such a party could not be found in the parliamentary *cave* and *popote*, and as if, furthermore, all shades of opinion had not from time immemorial hoisted that flag to disguise their hideous emptiness."

"So that he absolutely renounces sculpture, does he?" said Joseph Bridau.

"Not yet; he is just completing a statue of some saint or other, but he won't let anybody see it and doesn't intend to exhibit it this year. He has his own ideas on that subject too."

"Which are?" said Blondet.

"That Catholic works should not be delivered over to the judgment of critics and the gaze of a public equally corrupted with scepticism; that they should, without passing through the tumult of the world, be deposited, devoutly and without display, in the place for which they are intended."

"By the way! think of so fervent a Catholic fighting a duel!" observed Emile Blondet.

"There's something better than that. He's a Catholic and he lives with a woman he brought back with him from Italy, a sort of goddess of liberty, who serves him at once as model and housekeeper."

"What a tongue that Bixiou has, and what a bureau of information he is!" said his two companions as they separated.

They were summoned by Madame de Montcornet to take a cup of tea from her hand.

You see, dear monsieur, that Monsieur Dorlange's political aspirations are hardly taken seriously, and that people have just about the same idea of their result as that I predicted. I have no doubt that you will write him very soon to thank him for the warmth with which he defended you against calumny. That courageous act of self-sacrificing devotion has given me a genuine sympathetic feeling for him and I shall be overjoyed to see you make use of the influence of your former friendship to turn him aside from the deplorable path upon which he is about to enter. I pass no judgment on the other obliquities of vision attributed to him by Monsieur Bixiou, who is very trenchant and very unreliable, and, like Joseph Bridau, I should be disposed to look upon them as very venial; but to my mind he would make a mistake to be forever regretted, if he should abandon a career in which he already has an advantageous position, to throw himself into the mêlée of politics. Preach at him therefore with all your strength, in such a way as to bind him anew to his art. You are personally interested in having him take that course, if you still propose to entrust to him the work he has hitherto refused to undertake. As to the explanation which I advised you to have with him, I can safely say that your task is much simplified. I do not now consider that you are called upon to go into any of the details which might be too painful for

you. Madame de l'Estorade, to whom I suggested the rôle of mediator which I had in mind for her, accepted it very willingly, and she is confident that in half an hour's conversation she can scatter all the clouds that can possibly exist between you and your friend.

I sent to obtain news of him while I was writing this long letter: the report is as favorable as possible, and the doctors are not in the least anxious concerning him, unless some extraordinary and altogether unforeseen complication should arise. It seems, by the way, that he is an object of general interest, for, as my servant expresses it, *people are standing in line* waiting their turn to inscribe their names in his visitors' book.

I ought to say also that Monsieur de Rhétoré is not liked. He is very stiff and by no means a bright man. How different from her who holds so large a place in our fondest memories! She was simple and kindly, without ever derogating from her dignity, and nothing could be compared with the lovable qualities of her heart, unless it were the charms of her mind.

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COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME OCTAVE DE CAMPS

Paris, February, 1839.

Nothing could be more judicious than all that you write me, dear madame; it was the most probable thing in the world that at our next meeting, my tormenter would not hesitate to accost me. His heroism gave him the right to do it and the simplest politeness made it his duty. Under pain of being considered the most boorish of sighing swains, he should have come and made inquiries concerning the effect upon Naïs's health and mine of the accident in which he came to our aid. But, contrary to all my anticipations, he persisted in not descending from his cloud; and so, under the inspiration of your sage advice, I resolutely decided upon my own course. As the mountain would not come to me, I would go to the mountain; like Hippolyte in Theramenes' story, I would *ride straight at the monster*, and discharge my gratitude at him point-blank. Like myself, dear madame, I realized that the really dangerous side of this absurd persecution was its duration, and the inevitable scandal with which it threatened me sooner or later. The possibility that my servants, my children might at any moment discover the secret; the disagreeable comments to which I should be exposed if it were discovered by

strangers; and, above all, the idea of the ridiculous affair coming to the ears of Monsieur de l'Estorade, and driving him to extremities which I could foresee only too well, in view of his southern blood and the memories of his military past; all this had excited me to such a pitch that I cannot describe my feelings, and even your forebodings would have been more than realized.—Not only did I resign myself to the necessity of speaking first to my gentleman; but I would compel him to tell me his name and his place of abode on the specious pretence that my husband intended to call on him; then, if he should prove to be an eligible person in any sense of the word, I would ask him to dinner the next day, having fully decided to fasten the wolf in the sheepfold. After all, where was the danger? If he had the slightest shadow of common sense, when he saw the terms on which I live with Monsieur de l'Estorade, my *ferocious* passion for my children, as you used jokingly to call it,—in a word, all the virtuous economy of my home life, could he fail to realize the fruitlessness of his persistence? In any event, whether he proved incorrigible or not, his ardor would certainly be deprived of its *open air* character. If I were still to be beset by him, it would at least be in my own house, and I should no longer have to deal with one of the coursing enterprises to which we are all more or less exposed: and in fact one always succeeds in passing over those slippery steps with honor, if one has ever so little virtue and some mental resources. I do not

mean that the step I was about to take did not come hard to me. When the critical moment arrived, I was not at all sure that I had sufficient self-possession to deal loftily with the affair as it was necessary to do. Nevertheless I was firmly resolved; and you know that, when I have once formed a plan, I carry it out.

Well, dear madame, all my beautiful schemes, all my expenditure of courage, all your expenditure of foresight, are utterly wasted. Since your last letter the doctor has left me to my own devices; I have been out therefore several times, always majestically flanked by my children, so that their presence, in case I should be compelled to speak first, might serve to soften the oddity of that step; but in vain did I scan every inch of the horizon out of the corner of my eye, nothing, absolutely nothing, appeared bearing any resemblance to a rescuer or a lover. What do you make of this new attitude, madame? I spoke just now of riding at a monster. Can it be that my gentleman proposes to adopt the manners of a monster and a monster of the most dangerous description? How am I to interpret this absence? Has he, with marvelous foresight and sagacity, scented the snare in which we expected to catch him, and prudently determined to keep at a distance? Is he even deeper than that? Can this man, in whom I refused to discover a trace of good breeding, have carried refinement and delicacy of sentiment so far as to sacrifice his caprice to the fear of marring the effect of his noble act?

But, upon that assumption, we shall really have to reckon with him, and, my dear Monsieur de l'Estorade, you must be on guard! Do you know that the rivalry of a man actuated by such lofty feelings might end by being more dangerous than it would seem to be at first glance?

You see, dear madame, I try to be cheerful, but I believe that, if the truth were known, I sing because I am afraid. This adroit and unexpected retreat casts me into endless reflections; those reflections border upon other ideas and other observations which I treated lightly at first, but of which I must now speak, because it is impossible to see the end of this trouble. You can not be in doubt as to the nature of my feeling for this man. He saved my daughter, it is true, but only that I might be under obligation to him. Meanwhile he overturned all my most cherished habits: I am obliged to let my poor children go out without me; I can no longer go to church when I wish, for he has the audacity to interpose between God and myself, even at the foot of the altar; lastly, he has disturbed the absolute serenity of ideas and sentiments which has hitherto been the joy and pride of my life. But, while he is intolerable and hateful to me, this persecutor of mine exerts a sort of magnetism over me that worries me. Before I see him I feel him at my side. His glance weighs upon me without meeting my eyes. He is ugly, but there is a suggestion of energetic and powerful individuality in his ugliness which makes it impossible to forget

him, and inclines one to credit him with powerful and vigorous faculties. Thus, whatever I may do, I cannot keep him out of my mind. Now, it seems to me that I have rid myself of his presence to some extent. Very good, and that means? I feel a sort of void—the kind of void, you know, that the ear is conscious of, when a shrill, penetrating noise, by which it has long been tortured, suddenly ceases.

What I am about to add will seem to you extremely childish, but can one control these mirages of the imagination? I have often told you of my warm discussions with Louise de Chaulieu concerning the way in which women should take life. I told her that the passion that she never ceased to pursue was unnatural and fatal to happiness. And she replied: "You have never loved, my dear; love implies a phenomenon so rare that one may live all one's life without meeting the being to whom nature has given the power to make one happy. In a day of glory there appears a being who awakens your heart from its slumber to whom you will speak in a different key!"—See *Memoirs of Two Young Wives*.—Dear madame, the words of those who are about to die become prophetic. *Mon Dieu!* suppose that that man should prove to be the dilatory serpent with whom Louise seemed to threaten me! That he can ever be a source of real danger to me, that it is in his power to make me false to my duties is not what is to be feared, of course, and I am conscious of strength to resist such disasters. But I did not, like you, dear madame, marry a man that my heart

selected. It was only by dint of patience, determination and argument that I succeeded in building up the virtuous and firm attachment that unites me to Monsieur de l'Estorade. Must I not therefore take alarm at the bare idea of any cause of distraction that threatens to weaken that sentiment, and is it not truly pitiful that my mind should be constantly occupied with another man, even though it be to detest him? I will say to you, like MONSIEUR, brother of Louis XIV, who often carried to his wife something that he had just written and begged her to decipher it for him: examine my heart and my mind for me, dear madame; dissipate the mist, calm the contrary currents, the ebb and flow of the will, which this adventure keeps constantly in motion within me. My poor Louise was mistaken, was she not? and I am not a woman over whom any advantage is to be taken in the matter of love? *The man who, in a day of glory, can hope to make me happy* is my Armand, my René, my Naïs, the three angels for whom and by whom I have lived hitherto, and there will never be any other passion for me, I am sure of it!

COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME OCTAVE DE CAMPS

Paris, March, 1839.

In the same week, in the year 1820, the college of Tours enlisted two new recruits, to use the technical language of my son Armand. One of them had a beautiful face; the other might have been

considered ugly, had not the blooming health, the honesty and the intelligence that shone in his face atoned for the lack of refinement and the irregularity of the features.—You will stop me at this point, dear madame, and ask me if I have seen the end of my great anxiety, that I am in the mood to write you a serial novel? On the contrary, and although it has not that appearance, this exordium that so surprises you is simply the sequel and continuation of my adventure. Be kind enough to give me your attention and not interrupt me; with that, I resume.—Almost as soon as they were thrown together the two children formed a close friendship; there was more than one excellent reason for their intimacy. One, the handsomer of the two, was of a dreamy, contemplative disposition, a little melancholy even; the other, earnest, impetuous and always ready for action. Thus their two natures were complements of each other: an invaluable combination to give duration to a friendship. Moreover, both had the same taint upon their birth. The dreamer was a natural child, son of the famous Lady Brandon; his name was Marie-Gaston, which is almost no name. The other, whose father and mother were both unknown, was called Dorlange, which is no name at all. Dorlange, Valmon, Volmar, Derfeuil, Melcourt —you never find people with such names as those except on the stage, and there, only in the old repertory, whither they have gone to join Arnolphe, Alceste, Clitandre, Damis, Eraste, Philinte and

Arsinoé. Another reason for the poor ill-born creatures to cling closely together, was the cruel abandonment of which they were both victims.

During seven mortal years that they devoted to their studies, the door of their prison was not thrown open for them for a single day, even in vacation. At long intervals Marie-Gaston received a visit from an old servant who had been employed by his mother. His quarterly bills were paid by that woman. Dorlange's fees were paid by means of remittances made with great regularity, every three months, to a banker at Tours from an unknown source. A fact to be noted is that the young student's weekly allowance had been fixed at the highest figure permitted by the rules of the institution: whence the conclusion that his unknown kindred must be well-to-do people. Thanks to that conclusion, and, above all, to the generous use he made of his money, Dorlange had attained a certain degree of consideration among his companions, which, by the way, he would have been at no loss to compel by strength of wrist, if necessary; but the remark was commonly made none the less, in undertones, that no one had ever sent for him to come to the parlor, and that not a soul outside the limits of the college had ever shown the slightest interest in him. Those two children who were destined to be distinguished men some day, were only moderately good scholars. Although they were neither intractable nor lazy, what cared they for prizes at the end of the year, having no mother

to delight with their triumphs? They had their own way of studying. At the age of fifteen, Marie-Gaston's name was at the head of a volume of verses,—satires, elegies, meditations, and two tragedies. Dorlange's studies impelled him to rob wood-piles: with his knife he carved *Virgins*, clowns, schoolmasters, saints, grenadiers of the Old Guard, and, with greater secrecy, *Napoléons*. In 1827, having completed their course, the two friends left the college together and were directed to Paris. A place had been previously provided for Dorlange in Bosio's studio, and from that moment there began to be something decidedly eccentric in the course of the occult protection that hovered over his head. When he alighted at the house whose address had been handed him by the principal of the college at the moment of his departure, he was shown to a small apartment daintily furnished. Under the clock was a large envelope bearing his name, so placed as to catch his eye at once. In that envelope he found a note written in pencil and consisting of these words only:

"On the day after reaching Paris, at precisely eight o'clock in the morning, be in the Luxembourg garden, Avenue de l'Observatoire, fourth bench on the right from the gate. This order must be obeyed; do not fail."

Dorlange was on hand promptly at the appointed time, as you can well believe, and had not been there long when he was accosted by a little man not more than two feet tall, who, by reason of his enormous head with its dense mass of hair, his

hooked chin and nose and crooked legs, might have been taken for a dwarf escaped from one of Hoffmann's *Tales*. Without speaking, for, in addition to all his other physical advantages, this gallant messenger was deaf and dumb, he handed the young man a letter and a purse. The letter said that Dorlange's family were pleased to see that he had devoted himself to the fine arts. He was urged to work courageously and to profit by the lessons of the great master with whom he was placed. They hoped that he would lead a prudent life; at all events they would keep an eye upon his conduct. But they did not choose that he should be deprived of any of the respectable diversions suited to his age. For his necessities, as well as for his pleasures, he could count upon twenty-five louis every three months, which would be handed him at the same spot by the same man. With regard to the messenger, Dorlange was expressly forbidden to follow him when he took his leave, after his errand was done. The penalty for direct or indirect disregard of that injunction was very serious; it was nothing less than the cessation of all pecuniary assistance, coupled with a threat of absolute abandonment.

Do you remember, dear madame, that in 1831 I dragged you to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, where the exhibition of the works entered in competition for the grand prize in sculpture was in progress? The subject of the competition appealed to my heart: *Niobe Weeping for Her Children*. Do you

remember also my indignation at the work of one of the competitors, around which the crowd was so dense that we could hardly approach it? The insolent creature! he had dared to treat the subject satirically! His Niobe, I can but agree with you and the public, was touching beyond measure in her beauty and her grief; but what a deplorable profanation of talent, to have conceived the idea of representing the children in the shape of monkeys, stretched out on the ground in most diverse and most grotesque attitudes! It was useless for you to insist that those little monkeys were fascinatingly lovely and wittily conceived, and that it would be impossible to satirize more ingeniously the blind idolatry of those mothers, who detect a finished masterpiece of nature in a disgusting little imp; I insisted none the less that it was an abominable conception, and the wrath of the old academicians, who demanded that that impertinent statue should be formally debarred from the competition, seemed to me justified in every point. Yielding to public clamor, and to the newspapers, which talked of opening a subscription to send the young artist to Rome in case the prize should not be awarded him, the Academy did not voice my feeling in the matter nor that of the old academicians. The marvelous beauty of the Niobe neutralized all the rest, and at the price of a stern admonition which the Permanent Secretary was ordered to bestow upon him on the day the prizes were distributed, the slanderer of mothers saw the laurel wreath placed upon his

work. The wretch! but I forgive him now, for he never knew his own mother! He was Dorlange, the poor outcast of the college at Tours, Marie-Gaston's friend.

For four years, from 1827 to 1831, when Dorlange started for Rome, the friends had not parted. With his allowance of twenty-four hundred francs, always promptly paid through the medium of the mysterious dwarf, Dorlange was a sort of Marquis d'Aligre. Marie-Gaston, on the other hand, reduced to his own resources, would have been in dire straits; but between people who love each other—and the species is more rare than is commonly supposed—everything on one side and nothing on the other is an unanswerable argument for combination. Our two doves put all their property into the partnership, without an inventory: lodgings, money, sorrows, pleasures, hopes, they shared everything in common; the two lived but one life, so to speak. Unluckily for Marie-Gaston, his efforts were not, like Dorlange's, crowned with success. His volume of verses, carefully recast and retouched, with many other poems produced by his pen, and two or three plays with which he enriched his portfolio: all these, for lack of good will among publishers and theatrical managers, remained pitilessly unpublished. The firm, at Dorlange's instance, thereupon took a momentous step: it saved money, and with its savings obtained the amount necessary to print a volume. The title was fascinating: *Les Perce-Neige* —The Snow-Drops—; the cover was of the prettiest

pearl-gray, the margins were generous, and there was a lovely little vignette drawn by Dorlange. But the public followed the example of the publishers and managers; they would neither buy nor read; so that, on a certain rent-day, Marie-Gaston, in a fit of desperation, sent for a bookstall-keeper and sold him the whole edition at three sous a volume, whereupon there was soon a perfect flood of *Perce-Neiges* along the quays, in all the show-windows, from Pont Royal to Pont Marie. That wound was still bleeding in the poet's heart, when the question arose of Dorlange's going to Italy. Thenceforth community of goods was impossible. Being informed through the mysterious dwarf that the allowance made by his family would continue to be paid at the banking-house of Torlonia at Rome, Dorlange insisted upon devoting to Marie-Gaston's needs, during the five years of their separation, the fifteen hundred francs allotted to him as a pensioner of the king. But the warm heart that knows how to receive a gift is even more rare than the warm heart that knows how to give. Embittered by his constant disappointments, Marie-Gaston had not the courage for the sacrifice that was demanded of him. The dissolution of the partnership laid too bare the position of debtor that he had hitherto accepted. Some work put in his hands by Daniel d'Arthez, our great writer, added to his own small means, would be sufficient to keep him alive, he said. So he peremptorily refused what his self-esteem led him to call charity. That

ill-advised pride brought about a shadow of coolness between the two friends. Their intimacy was kept up, however, until 1833, by a reasonably active correspondence, but on Marie-Gaston's side confidence and unreserve were no longer absolute. He had something to conceal; his haughty assertion of his ability to provide for himself had proved to be a bitter mistake. Every day his embarrassment had grown more serious, and, under the impulsion of that detestable adviser, he had given a lamentable turn to his life. Risking all to win all, he had tried to put an end to the incessant pressure of need by which his flight seemed to him to be paralyzed. Having rashly involved himself in a newspaper enterprise, in order to obtain a preponderating influence therein, he had assumed almost the whole burden, and with obligations amounting to not less than thirty thousand francs staring him in the face, he could see the debtor's prison opening its capacious maw to devour him.

It was just at that time that his meeting with Louise de Chaulieu took place. During the nine months that their marriage was in the budding stage, Marie-Gaston's letters were less and less frequent; nor was there one of them that was not stained with the crime of lèse-friendship! Dorlange should have been the first to know everything, and nothing was confided to him. Her most high and puissant ladyship Louise de Chaulieu, Baronne de Macumer, had demanded that it should be so. When the time for the wedding arrived, Madame de

Macumer's passion for secrecy increased to a sort of frenzy. Why, she hardly told me, her dearest friend, when the event was to take place, and no one was admitted to the ceremony. To satisfy the requirements of the law, there must of course be witnesses. But at the same time that Marie-Gaston invited two of his friends to serve in that capacity, he broke off his friendship with them, good-humoredly but entirely. For any other than his wife, he wrote to Daniel d'Arthez, "friendship, having become purely an abstract sentiment, will continue to exist without the friend." I really think that Louise, to ensure greater discretion, would have had the witnesses murdered when they left the mayor's office, except that she still retained some slight respect for the king's attorney. Dorlange was absent: too lucky a chance to conceal everything from him, to be lost. Had he entered the convent of La Trappe, Marie-Gaston could have thought no less of him. By writing to common friends, however, and making inquiries, the maltreated sculptor learned at last that Marie-Gaston no longer lived on earth, but that a jealous divinity had, in mythological fashion, borne him away, like Tithonus, to a rustic Olympus which she had caused to be built for the express purpose in the woods at Ville d'Avray.

In 1836, when he returned from Rome, the sequestration of Marie-Gaston's person was still in effect, stricter and more inexorable than ever. Dorlange had too much self-esteem to make his way

stealthily or by superior force into the sanctuary erected by Louise and her insane passion; Marie-Gaston was too deeply enamored to break his ban and escape from the gardens of Armida. The two friends, incredible as it may seem, did not meet, did not even exchange a note. But, at the news of Madame Marie-Gaston's death, Dorlange forgets everything and hurries away to Ville d'Avray to carry consolation thither. Useless haste: two hours after the sad ceremony, without a thought for his friend, for a step-daughter, or two nephews, whose mainstay he was, Marie-Gaston had jumped into a post-chaise which whirled him off toward Italy. Dorlange considered that that exhibition of the selfishness of grief filled the measure to overflowing, and he believed that he had banished from his heart forever the last souvenir of a friendship, which had not bloomed again even under the breath of misfortune. My husband and I had loved Louise de Chaulieu too dearly not to continue to feel something of the same sentiment for him who had been her whole life for three long years. When he went away, Marie-Gaston had requested Monsieur de l'Estorade to undertake the care of all his property, and later he sent him a power of attorney to that effect. Some weeks ago his grief, which is still alive and active, suggested an idea to him. In the centre of the famous park of Ville d'Avray there is a little artificial lake, and in the centre of the lake an islet of which Louise was very fond. To that island, a peaceful and secluded spot, Marie-Gaston

determined to transfer his wife's remains, and from Carrara, whither he had gone that he might better estimate the cost of a marble monument, he wrote to us to tell us of his idea. On that occasion he remembered Dorlange and requested my husband to call upon him and ascertain whether he would be willing to undertake the monument. Dorlange at first pretended not to remember Marie-Gaston's name and declined the order upon some polite pretext. But, pray observe and admire the steadfastness of purpose of those who love! during the evening of the same day on which he showed Monsieur de l'Estorade the door, being at the Opéra, he overhears the Duc de Rhétoré speak slightingly of his former friend and takes up his words with the utmost eagerness. Result, a duel, in which he was wounded, and of which you certainly must have heard: so that we have a man putting himself in the way to be killed for one whom he uncompromisingly denied that same morning.

How this long narrative is connected with my absurd adventure, I would tell you, dear madame, were it not that my letter is already unconscionably long. And then, as I called it a serial novel, does it not seem that the moment is wonderfully chosen to keep your interest in suspense? It seems to me that I have aroused your curiosity with sufficient skill to have earned the right not to gratify it. To be continued, whether you will or not, by the next mail.

COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME OCTAVE DE CAMPS

Paris, March, 1839.

The extended biographical digression through which I compelled you to wander, madame, was taken in the main from a very recent letter from Monsieur Marie-Gaston. Upon learning of the heroic self-sacrifice of which he had been the object, his first impulse was to hasten to Paris, to press the hand of the incomparable friend who had taken such a noble revenge for his neglect. Unluckily, on the eve of his departure, he was detained by a cruel accident. By an inexplicable sort of sympathy, while Monsieur Dorlange received a wound in his behalf in Paris, he himself had a severe fall at Savarezza, while visiting one of the finest quarries operated in the vicinity of Carrara, and dislocated a leg. Being obliged to postpone his journey, he wrote from his bed of pain to Monsieur Dorlange, to express his heartfelt gratitude to him; but a bulky letter reached me also by the same mail: after narrating the whole history of their former intimacy, Monsieur Marie-Gaston implored me to see his old schoolfellow and to be his advocate with him. It was not enough for him that he had most convincing and notorious proof of the place he still held in Monsieur Dorlange's affection: his purpose was to prove to him that he had never ceased to deserve that place, despite all appearances to the contrary. It was a difficult matter for Monsieur Marie-Gaston

to establish that fact, because he would never have consented, at any price, to attribute to their real author the affronts for which he seemed to assume the responsibility. Therein, however, lies the whole essence of his conduct toward Monsieur Dorlange. His wife was determined to have him to herself alone and had displayed extraordinary persistence in isolating him from all other affection. But nothing would have induced him to acknowledge and admit the species of moral inferiority disclosed by that unreasonable, frenzied jealousy. Louise de Chaulieu in his eyes was perfection itself, and she still seemed adorable to him even in the most extreme developments of her imagination and her temperament. All that he will ever concede is that the personality and the actions of that beloved despot can not be weighed in the same balance as the personalities and the actions of other women. He maintains that Louise was a glorious exception to her sex and that, for that reason, her character may perhaps need to be explained in order to be understood. Now who could be better fitted to undertake that duty than I, from whom she had no secrets? I was entreated therefore to perform, for the benefit of Monsieur Dorlange, that *commentator's task*, if I may so describe it: for, when Madame Marie-Gaston's influence should be once justified and admitted, her husband's whole behavior would naturally be condoned.

My first thought toward carrying out Monsieur Marie-Gaston's wish was to write a line to his friend the sculptor and request him to call upon me. But

I reflected that he had scarcely recovered from his wound; and then, would not my rôle of mediator assume portentous solemnity in that prearranged interview which would have a previously determined end in view? I bethought myself of another method. People visit artists' studios every day: I might easily call upon Monsieur Dorlange, unannounced, accompanied by Naïs and my husband, on the specious pretext of renewing the pressing representations that had already been made to him to obtain the assistance of his talent. While pretending to have come for the purpose of exerting the weight of my feminine influence in that direction, I should have no difficulty in making a transition to the real object of my visit; do you not approve my course, dear madame, do you not think that that was an excellent way of arranging matters?—And so, the day after I had formed my noble resolution, I arrived with the escort I have mentioned at a small house of pleasant exterior, on Rue de l'Ouest, behind the Luxembourg, in one of the most retired quarters of Paris. Fragments of sculpture, bas-reliefs and inscriptions gracefully carved in the walls around the door bore witness at once to the good taste and the ordinary occupation of the proprietor. On the steps, adorned by two beautiful antique urns, we were received by a woman of whom Monsieur de l'Estorade had already said a word to me. The laureate of Rome, it seems, did not choose to leave Italy without bringing with him some pleasant memento. A sort of bourgeois Galatea, sometimes

housekeeper, sometimes model, thus representing domesticity and art, this fair Italian, if we are to credit certain indiscreet reports, is called upon to typify, in Monsieur Dorlange's household, the most perfect ideal of the famous *maid-of-all-work*, constantly advertised by *Les Petites Affiches*. Let me hasten to say, however, that there is nothing, absolutely nothing, in her external appearance to suggest a thought of that strange accumulation of functions! A serious and somewhat coldly courteous manner, great velvety black eyes, a slightly sallow complexion, head-dress *en bandeaux*, which, by virtue of the width and cunning arrangement of luxuriant braids, gives you an idea of a most magnificent head of hair; hands a little large, but of refined shape, and of a golden whiteness that stood out against the black background of her dress; the latter simply made, but fitted so as to set off to the best advantage the remarkable beauty of her figure; and lastly, hovering over the whole, an indefinable touch of pride, almost of savagery, by which I have always heard that the women of the Transteverine are recognized at Rome: such is the portrait of our introductress, who led us through a gallery crowded with objects of art, through which you reach the studio. While the fair housekeeper announced Monsieur le Comte and Madame la Comtesse de l'Estorade, Monsieur Dorlange, in a picturesque studio costume, with his back turned toward us, hastily drew a broad green serge curtain over a statue upon which he was at work when we came.

The moment that he turned, and before I had time to look in his face, imagine my amazement when I saw Naïs rush toward him and with childish *naïveté* almost throw herself upon his neck, crying:

"Ah! you are the gentleman who saved me!"

"What!" you will say, "the gentleman who saved her? Why, if that is so, Monsieur Dorlange is the famous stranger?"—"Yes, madame, and at the first glance, I, as Naïs had done, saw that it was he."—"But if he was the stranger, he was also the persecutor?"—"Yes, madame; chance, which is often the most skilful of novelists, decreed that Monsieur Dorlange should be both the one and the other; and it seems to me that you must have suspected as much from my last letter, simply from the somewhat prolix way in which I sketched his life."—"But in that case, you, my dear countess, stumbling into his studio in that way—?"

Do not speak of it, madame! Excited, trembling, turning red and pale in turn, I must for a moment have presented the spectacle of the most absolute confusion imaginable.

Luckily my husband embarked upon a decidedly complicated speech, expressive of the emotion of a happy and grateful father. Meanwhile I had leisure to collect myself, and when it was my turn to take the floor, I had assumed one of my finest *Estorade expressions* as it pleases you to call them; I register twenty-five degrees below zero then, you know, and could cause the words to turn to ice upon the lips of the most ardent of lovers. I hoped in that

way to keep monsieur l'artiste at a distance and to interpose an obstacle to his conceiving the idea of taking undue advantage of my idiotic presence in his house. As to Monsieur Dorlange, he seemed to me to be much less confused than surprised by the meeting; and as if we were dwelling upon our gratitude too long to suit his modesty, he abruptly changed the subject, in order to cut us short.

"*Mon Dieu*, madame," he said, "as we are better acquainted than we thought, may I venture to indulge my curiosity?"

I fancied that I could feel the claw of the cat preparing to play with its victim; so I replied:

"Artists, if I am rightly informed, are often very indiscreet in their curiosity."

And I emphasized the hint by a very marked harshness of tone which seemed to me well adapted to complete its meaning. Our man was not at all disconcerted apparently.

"I trust," he rejoined, "that that will not be true of my question: I simply wished to know if you had a sister?"

"Bah!" thought I, "a subterfuge! To charge the audacious persistency of his persecution to the account of a resemblance—that's the game we are going to play."

But, even though it had seemed best to me to allow him that means of escape, in Monsieur de l'Estorade's presence, I was not at liberty to lie.

"No, monsieur," I replied, "I have no sister; none that I know of, at least."

I uttered that reply with a cunning air, to show him that I was not to be taken for a dupe.

"It was by no means impossible, however," rejoined Dorlange with the most natural air imaginable, "that my supposition should have some foundation in truth. The family in which I met a person who bore a strong resemblance to you, is surrounded by a certain mysterious atmosphere which justifies any supposition in regard to it."

"Would it be impertinent to ask you the name of that family?"

"Not in the least; they are people whom you may have known in Paris in 1829 and 1830, for they lived in great state and gave very beautiful parties; I met them myself in Italy."

"But their name?" I asked, with an insistence in which there was certainly no charitable intent.

"The Lanty family," replied Monsieur Dorlange without embarrassment or hesitation.

In fact, dear madame, there was a family of that name in Paris, before I came here myself to live, and you must remember, as well as I, hearing some very strange stories concerning them.

As he answered my question the artist walked toward his veiled statue.

"The sister that you had not, madame," he said abruptly, "I have taken the liberty of giving

you, and I venture to ask you to see if you can distinguish some slight family resemblance to yourself."

As he spoke he drew away the curtain behind which his work was concealed, and behold, madame, I appeared to myself in the guise of a saint, with a halo around my head. How, I beg you, could I be angry? In presence of the extraordinary resemblance, my husband and Naïs uttered a cry of admiration. Monsieur Dorlange, undertaking without further delay his apology for that dramatic stroke, continued as follows:

"This statue is a *Saint-Ursule*, ordered for a provincial convent. As the result of circumstances which it would take me too long to detail, the type of beauty of the person of whom I spoke to you a moment since was deeply engraved in my memory. Vainly did I try, by force of imagination, to create another which should be a more perfect image of my thought. I had begun therefore to model from memory; but one day, madame, at Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, I noticed you, and I was superstitious enough to look upon you as a copy sent to me by Providence. After that I worked from no other model than you; and as I could not think of asking you to come to my studio to pose, I multiplied my chances of meeting you to the best of my ability. I carefully avoided ascertaining your name or anything concerning your social position; that would have been to materialize you, and degrade you from the ideal. If ill-luck had decreed that my

assiduity in putting myself in your way should be noticed by you, you would have taken me for one of the idlers who haunt the streets in search of adventures, and yet I was simply a conscientious artist, taking his chance where he finds it, as Molière says, and trying to draw my inspiration from nature alone, which always produces much more perfect results."

"Oh! I had noticed that you were following us!" said Naïs with a little knowing air.

Is it possible to understand anything about children, dear madame? Naïs had seen everything; at the time of her accident it would have been natural for her to speak to her father or to me of the gentleman whose assiduity had not escaped her, but not a word! Brought up by me with such unremitting care and having almost never left me for a moment, it is impossible for me to doubt her absolute innocence. I must needs believe therefore that nature alone endows girls, at the age of thirteen, with the instinct of secretiveness; is it not a horrible thought? But husbands, dear madame,—they are the ones who terrify you most of all, when, at times, you see them stupidly fall victims to a sort of predestination! Mine, one would say, should have pricked up his ears at the story of the barefaced way in which my gentleman had taken me for a model; Monsieur de l'Estorade is not generally considered a fool, either; he always exhibits the keenest sense of propriety, and I believe that he is quite likely to show himself absurdly jealous if I should

ever give him the slightest cause therefor; but to see his *belle Renée*, as he calls me, executed in white marble in the guise of a saint, had apparently cast him into such an ecstasy of admiration that he no longer knew where he was. He and Naïs were engrossed in forming a careful estimate of the fidelity of the copy: it was my pose, my eyes, my mouth, and even the two dimples in my cheeks! At last I thought it my duty to assume the rôle which Monsieur de l'Estorade seemed to have abandoned altogether, and I said to the impertinent artist, with great gravity:

"Do you not think, monsieur, that to appropriate without permission—let us not mince words, to steal —a person's face in this way might well seem to be a very extraordinary proceeding?"

"And for that reason, madame," he replied respectfully, "my fraudulent appropriation would have been carried only as far as you had permitted. Although my statue is destined to be buried in the oratory of a convent, I should not have despatched it until I had obtained your consent to leave it in the state at which it had arrived. I should have ascertained your address, when I wished to do so, and, confessing the impulse to which I had yielded, I should have requested you to come and inspect my work. If, when you stood in its presence, a too close resemblance had seemed to displease you, I would have said to you what I say to-day: that with a few strokes of the chisel I will undertake to deceive the most practised eye."

He actually spoke of making the resemblance less striking! My husband apparently thought that it had not been made striking enough, for, turning to Monsieur Dorlange at that moment:

"Monsieur," he said, hypocritically, "don't you think that Madame de l'Estorade's nose is a shade more delicate?"

Upset as I was by all these unforeseen complications, I should have pleaded Marie-Gaston's cause but ill; but at the very first words I said upon the subject to Monsieur Dorlange, he replied:

"I know, madame, all that you can say to me in defense of my unfaithful friend. I do not forgive him, but I forget. Matters have so turned out that I came near being killed for him, it would really be too illogical for me to harbor malice against him. Nevertheless, so far as the monument at Ville-d'Avray is concerned, nothing will induce me to undertake it. I have already told Monsieur de l'Estorade of an obstacle which, from day to day, takes shape more clearly; I consider it a pitiful thing, too, for Marie-Gaston thus to devise methods of keeping his grief alive, and I have written him to that effect. He must be a man and look to study and hard work for the consolation that can always be expected from them."

The purpose of my visit was accomplished and I had no hope, at present, of going to the bottom of all these obscure matters, which, however, I must penetrate at some time. As I rose to go, Monsieur Dorlange said to me:

"May I hope that you will not require me to inflict too much *damage* on my statue?"

"It is for my husband, rather than for me, to answer you; but we will speak of it again, for Monsieur de l'Estorade hopes that you will do us the honor of calling."

Monsieur Dorlange bowed in token of respectful acquiescence and we went away. As he was escorting us to our carriage, not venturing to offer me his arm, I turned to call Naïs who was going imprudently near a Pyrenean dog that lay in the courtyard. I thereupon spied the fair housekeeper behind the curtain at one of the windows, evidently intent upon watching me. When she saw that her curiosity was discovered, she drew the curtain with noticeable abruptness.

"Well, well," I thought, "so that girl is jealous of me! Can it be that she is afraid that I shall become her rival, as a model if in no other capacity?"

The result was that I went away in a villainous mood; I was angry with Naïs and with my husband, and I was on the point of making a scene, of which he certainly would have understood nothing.

What do you think of it, dear madame? Is the man one of the most adroit knaves that can be found, able to extricate himself at one stroke from an uncomfortable predicament, to invent a most ingenious fable? or is he really an artist who, in all innocence, has taken me for the realization of his ideal? That is what I shall know within a few

days, for now, more than ever, it is essential for me to follow out my original programme, and no later than to-morrow Monsieur le Comte and Madame la Comtesse de l'Estorade will have the honor of inviting Monsieur Dorlange to dinner.

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COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME OCTAVE DE CAMPS

Paris, March, 1839.

Monsieur Dorlange dined with us yesterday, dear madame. My own idea was to have him *en famille*, so that I might the better keep him under my eye and question him at my ease. But Monsieur de l'Estorade, to whom I could not make up my mind to confide the motive of my charitable design, pointed out to me that an invitation to dine without other guests might seem insulting; Monsieur le Comte de l'Estorade, peer of France, would seem to consider that the sculptor Dorlange was not worthy to be admitted to his social circle.

"We cannot," added my husband laughingly, "treat him as we might treat the son of one of our farmers if he should call upon us with the epaulet of sub-lieutenant, entertain him behind closed doors, because we dared not send him to the servants' quarters."

So we had, with our principal guest, Joseph Bridau the painter, the Chevalier d'Espard, Monsieur and Madame de la Bastie and Monsieur de Ronquerolles. When he invited the last-named, my husband asked him if it would be unpleasant for him to meet Monsieur de Rhétoré's adversary? You know, of course, that the duke chose for seconds in

his duel General de Montriveau and Monsieur de Ronquerolles.

"So far from the meeting being disagreeable to me," he replied, "I gladly seize the opportunity to become better acquainted with a man of talent, whose conduct, in the affair in which I was involved, was beyond praise."

And when my husband told him of our great obligation to Monsieur Dorlange, he cried:

"Why, he's a hero, is he, this artist? If he keeps on, he will surpass us all!"

In his studio, with his neck bare—so that his head, which is a little bit large for the rest of his body, stood out by itself—and dressed in a sort of oriental costume which was a very happy conception of his, Monsieur Dorlange seemed much finer-looking than in his evening clothes. I must say, however, that when he becomes animated in conversation his face seems to light up, and then a flood of the magnetic currents that I had noticed at our previous meetings, pours from his eyes; Madame de la Bastie, like myself, was very much impressed by it. I don't know whether I have told you of Monsieur Dorlange's ambition, and that he expects to come forward as a candidate for the Chamber at the approaching elections. That was his reason for declining the commission which my husband had been authorized to offer him on behalf of Monsieur Marie-Gaston. What Monsieur de l'Estorade and myself took at first for a pretext, or a visionary plan, proves to be, apparently, a serious intention. At

table, when he was called upon by Monsieur Joseph Bridau to tell us how much credence should be placed in the reality of his parliamentary projects, Monsieur Dorlange formally corroborated them. The result was that the conversation had an extremely political flavor from that time till dinner was at an end. I expected to find our artist very imperfectly acquainted at least, if not absolutely unfamiliar with questions so entirely foreign to his previous studies. But no: concerning men and things, concerning the past as well as the future of parties, he expressed some genuinely novel views, in which there evidently was no borrowing from the phraseology of the daily newspapers; and it was all said earnestly, and in such fluent, refined language; so that, after his departure, Monsieur de l'Estorade and Monsieur de Ronquerolles expressed themselves as thoroughly surprised at the eminent and powerful political talent that had just been revealed to them. That admission is the more remarkable because those gentlemen, by temperament as well as from their position, are zealous conservatives, whereas Monsieur Dorlange's inclinations lead him in a marked degree toward democratic ideas. So far as concerned this unexpected mental superiority exhibited by my problematical lover, I began to be somewhat reassured. Politics is, in truth, an absorbing, overbearing passion which does not readily allow another passion to flourish by its side. Nevertheless, I had decided to probe our situation to the bottom, and, after dinner, I insidiously inveigled our man into one

of those tête-à-têtes which a hostess always finds it so easy to arrange. After talking a little while of Monsieur Marie-Gaston, our common friend, and of my poor Louise's paroxysms of passion and my fruitless efforts to moderate them, not hesitating to place him upon a footing where he would have every facility for beginning the attack, I asked him if the *Saint Ursule* would soon be despatched.

"Everything is ready for its departure," he replied; "but I require your *exeat*, madame, and that you should kindly tell me whether I am to change the expression in any way or not."

"One question first," I rejoined. "Assuming that I should desire any change made in your work, would it lose much by being thus made over?"

"Probably: however little you may clip the bird's wings, his flight is always impeded."

"Another question! Is it myself or *the other person* whom your statue reproduces most faithfully?"

"You, madame, that goes without saying: you are the present and she is the past."

"But to desert the past for the present, monsieur, is a proceeding to which a very severe name is applied, do you know it? and yet you acknowledge that evil impulse with an artlessness and indifference in which there is something ghastly."

"True," replied Monsieur Dorlange, with a laugh, "art is barbarous: wherever it spies the subject-matter of its creations, it pounces upon it with desperate fury."

"Art," I rejoined, "is a great word behind which a multitude of things may be concealed! The other day you told me that circumstances which it would take too long to detail had contributed to keep always before you the form of which I am a reflection and which has left such an ineffaceable mark in your memory: was not that equivalent to telling me in so many words that, in your case, it was not the sculptor only who remembered?"

"Really, madame, I had not the time to explain my meaning more satisfactorily; but, in any case, as I then had the honor to see you for the first time, would you not have considered it a most extraordinary performance on my part to presume to confide in you?"

"But to-day?" I replied boldly.

"To-day, in the absence of explicit encouragement, I should still have some difficulty in persuading myself that any part of my past history can have deep interest for you."

"Why so? There are acquaintances which ripen quickly. Your devotion to my Naïs was a long step forward in ours. Besides," I added, with assumed frivolity, "I am passionately fond of histories."

"Not only has mine the disadvantage of lacking a dénouement, but it is still an enigma to me."

"An additional reason for telling it to me: perhaps between us we shall find the key."

Monsieur Dorlange seemed to reflect a moment; then, after a brief silence, he said:

"It is true that women have a wonderful faculty

of grasping subtle distinctions in acts and feelings, of which we men can make nothing. But this confidence does not concern myself alone, and I must hope that it will remain strictly between ourselves; I do not even except Monsieur de l'Estorade from this stipulation; a secret is endangered as soon as it has passed beyond the person who reveals it and the person who listens."

I confess that my curiosity as to what was to follow was immeasurable; did not that last sentence indicate the preparations of a man who was making ready to hunt upon another's territory? Nevertheless, continuing my system of shameless encouragement, I replied:

"Monsieur de l'Estorade is so little accustomed to share all my secrets, that he has never seen a line of my correspondence with Madame Marie-Gaston."

All of which did not prevent my making a mental reservation of the right to maintain only a relative secrecy with you, dear madame; for are you not my director? and one must tell one's director everything if one desires to receive pertinent advice.

Thus far Monsieur Dorlange had remained standing in front of the hearth, at the corner of which I was sitting; at that point he took an easy-chair beside me, and began, by way of preamble:

"I have mentioned the Lanty family to you, madame—"

At that moment, as inopportune as a shower during a pleasure-party in the country, Madame de la Bastie approached and asked me if I had seen

Nathan's last play. As if I cared for other people's dramas in presence of the one in which, as it seemed to me, I had played a reasonably sprightly rôle! Monsieur Dorlange had no choice, however, but to give up the seat he occupied by my side, and it was impossible to renew our tête-à-tête during the evening. As you can see, dear madame, all my enticements and all my scheming resulted in no information; but, in default of words from Monsieur Dorlange, when I recall his whole attitude, which I studied most carefully, really my mind inclines most strongly toward the theory of his perfect innocence. Indeed there is nothing to indicate that love plays the rôle I had suspected in that interrupted story. There are a thousand other ways of establishing people firmly in one's memory, and, if Monsieur Dorlange did not really love her of whom I remind him, why should he bear a grudge against me, who only play second fiddle in the affair? Let us not be too forgetful, either, of his fair housekeeper, and even assuming that in that matter the senses are more concerned than the heart, must we not admit that that girl ought, to a certain extent at least, to act as a sort of safety-rail for me? In that view, dear madame, I should be more than ridiculous with all my terrors, which I have been dinning into your ears, and I should be not unlike Bélise in *Les Femmes Savantes*, wedded to the idea that every man who sees her falls dead in love with her.—I would however welcome with all my heart that insipid dénouement. Lover or no, Monsieur Dorlange

is a man of exalted character and of rare distinction of mind, and if he should not make himself altogether impossible by misplaced presumption, it would assuredly be a pleasure and an honor to number him among one's friends. Moreover, the service he rendered us predestines him to that rôle, and I should regret extremely having to treat him harshly. In that case I should have a falling out with Naïs, who, naturally enough, dotes upon her rescuer.

Last evening, after he had gone, she said to me with a most amusing little air of approbation:

"Mamma, how well Monsieur Dorlange speaks!"

Speaking of Naïs, this is the explanation she gave me of the reticence by which I was so puzzled.

"Why, mamma, I thought you noticed it too. But after he stopped the horses, as you didn't act as if you knew him, and as he hasn't a very distingué face, I supposed he was only a man."

"What! a man?"

"Why, yes! one of the people we don't take any notice of. But how happy I was when I found out he was a gentleman! You heard me, how I cried: '*Ah! you're the gentleman who saved me!*' "

If she is entirely artless, there is a deplorable suggestion of vanity in this explanation, upon which, as you may imagine, I delivered a highly moral lecture. That distinction between a man and a gentleman is shocking; but, after all, is not the child in the right? Only she says with unvarnished ingenuousness what our democratic moral code permits us to practise, to be sure, but does not permit

us to acknowledge aloud. The Revolution of '89 served to establish that virtuous hypocrisy in our society, if it did nothing else. But I too am verging upon politics, and if I should carry my ideas much farther you would tell me to beware, and say that Monsieur Dorlange has already begun to cast a spell upon me.

COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME OCTAVE DE CAMPS.

Paris, April, 1839.

For nearly two weeks, dear madame, we heard nothing of Monsieur Dorlange. Not only did he not think fit to come and resume the confidential communication so inopportunely interrupted by Madame de la Bastie, but he seemed to forget entirely that after dining with people one ought, at least, to leave a card on them within a week. We were at breakfast yesterday morning and I had just made that remark, not ill-humoredly, when our Lucas, who sometimes presumes upon his length of service to indulge in rather unseemly familiarity, triumphantly opened the dining-room door, and while he handed a note to Monsieur de l'Estorade with one hand, with the other he placed in the centre of the table an object of some sort, carefully swathed in silk paper, which I at first took for a piece of plate, mounted.

"What is that?" I said to Lucas, upon whose face I could read that he had a surprise in store.

I put out my hand to uncover the strange object.

"Oh! madame, take care!" cried Lucas, "it's fragile."

Meanwhile my husband had read the note, which he handed me, saying:

"Here is Monsieur Dorlange's apology!"

This is what Monsieur l'artiste wrote:

"MONSIEUR LE COMTE,

"I thought that I could see that Madame de l'Estorade authorized me, only with reluctance, to profit by the audacious theft committed by me to her prejudice. I therefore bravely resolved to modify my work in that view, and, at the present moment, the *two sisters* bear almost no resemblance to each other. I did not wish, however, that the *whole* should be lost to everybody, and so, having caused a casting to be made of Saint Ursule's head, before making the changes, I made a copy, reduced in size, which I have placed upon the shoulders of a charming countess not yet canonized, thank God! The mould was broken immediately after the casting of the only copy, which I have the honor of sending to you. This procedure, which was certainly all that propriety demanded, will perhaps give a little more value to the object.

"Deign to accept, Monsieur le Comte," etc.

While I was reading the note, my husband, Lucas, René and Naïs had vied with one another in their eagerness to extricate me from my outer covering, and behold, I was transformed from the saint I had been into a woman of the world, in the shape of a fascinating statuette, dressed most bewitchingly. I thought that Monsieur de l'Estorade, Naïs and René would go mad with delight and admiration. The news of the arrival of the chef-d'œuvre being

soon circulated through the house, all our servants, whom if the truth were known we are inclined to spoil, appeared one after another, as if they had been invited, and all cried out: "Ah! how lovely madame is!" I give you the substance of what they said, without attempting to recall the more or less absurd variations on that theme. I alone did not share the universal excitement. To serve to all eternity as material for Monsieur Dorlange's sculptural lucubrations seemed to me only a moderately enviable privilege, and for the reasons that you know, dear madame, I should have preferred not to be so often in his thoughts and under his chisel. As for Monsieur de l'Estorade, after spending an hour deciding in what part of his study the artist's masterpiece would be in the best light, he came to me and said:

"On my way to the *Cour des Comptes*, I shall drop in and see Monsieur Dorlange; if he is at liberty to-night, I shall ask him to dine with us; Armand, whom he doesn't yet know, will be at home to-day, so that he will see the whole family together, and you can thank him."

I did not approve of the idea of that invitation to a family party. It seemed to me that it would place Monsieur Dorlange on a footing of intimacy which, in view of his latest attention, began to seem dangerous to me. But to such remonstrances as I made Monsieur de l'Estorade replied:

"But, my dear, the first time we received him, you wanted it to be a family affair, which would

have been extremely rude; and to-day, when it is perfectly proper, you raise objections to it!"

To such a conclusive argument as that, which surprised me in the very act of self-contradiction, I had not a word to say, except, mentally, that husbands certainly have not a delicate hand. Monsieur Dorlange consented to join us. He must have found me rather lukewarm in my expressions of gratitude. I went so far as to say to him that he had misinterpreted my thoughts and that I would not have asked him to change his statue, the result of which was to make him regret his action and to imply that I did not greatly approve his gift of the morning. He was clever enough too to displease me in another matter, in regard to which, as you know, I am not very tractable. At dinner Monsieur de l'Estorade returned to the subject of his candidacy of which he expressed less approval than ever, although he no longer considered it absurd.

That led us straight to politics. Armand, who is of a serious, reflective turn and reads the newspapers, took part in the conversation. Contrary to the habit of young men of the present day, he agrees with his father, that is to say he is a very strong conservative, but perhaps he sometimes departs from that wise and judicious moderation which it is so hard to observe at fifteen. He was tempted therefore to contradict Monsieur Dorlange, whose tendency to jacobinism I have already mentioned to you. And, really, it did not seem to me that my

little man's arguments were very bad or very badly expressed.

Without ceasing to be courteous, Monsieur Dorlange seemed to scorn to enter into a discussion with the poor child, and reminded him rather harshly of his schoolboy's jacket, so that I saw that Armand was on the point of losing patience and speaking sharply. As he has been well brought up I had only to make him a sign and he restrained himself; but when I saw him turn almost purple and take refuge in absolute silence, I felt that his self-esteem had received a deep wound, and I considered it far from generous in Monsieur Dorlange to have crushed him thus with his superiority. I know very well that the children of to-day make the mistake of trying to assume too much importance, and that it does no harm now and then to interfere to prevent their being forty years old so soon. But really Armand's intellectual development and common-sense are beyond his years. Would you like a proof of it? Until last year I had not been willing to consent to part from him, and he attended the courses of study at Collége Henri IV. as a day-scholar. Well, he himself asked to be entered as a regular boarder at the college, in the interest of his studies, which suffered more or less from the going and coming necessitated by the other arrangement, and he expended more arguments and devised more schemes to obtain the favor of shutting himself up under the ferule of a schoolmaster, than an ordinary child would have employed to achieve the contrary

result. So it is that that assumption of manliness, which in many schoolboys is intolerably absurd, seems in him to be the result of natural precocity simply; and that precocity we certainly must forgive, as it comes to him from God. Thanks to the misfortune of his birth, Monsieur Dorlange is less likely than another to know what children are, and he must necessarily be lacking in indulgence to them. But let him beware! that is a wretched way of paying court to me, even on the footing of the simplest friendship.

It was not easy for me in a family party to lead him back to the subject of his past history, nor did it seem to me that he himself was very eager to recur to it. He paid much less attention to me in fact than to Naïs, for whom he cut out silhouettes for more than an hour. I must not forget to say that Madame de Rastignac arrived inopportunely, and that I had to devote myself entirely to her. While I was talking with her in front of the fire, Monsieur Dorlange had Naïs and René posing for him, and they triumphantly brought me their profiles, wonderfully like, executed in a few turns of the scissors.

"Just think!" said Naïs in an undertone, "Monsieur Dorlange wants to make a bust of me in marble!"

All that seemed to me in wretched taste. I don't like to have artists, when they are admitted to a salon, act as if they continued to practise their profession there. They seem in that way to justify the aristocratic pride which frequently looks upon

them as not worthy to be received for their own sakes. Monsieur Dorlange left us early, and Monsieur de l'Estorade jarred upon my nerves, as he has done many times in his life, when, as he walked to the door with our guest who tried to escape unnoticed, I heard him say that he must come more frequently and that I passed almost all my evenings at home. That famous invitation kindled civil war among my children: Naïs lauds her dear rescuer to the skies, being supported in her opinion by René, who has gone over, body and soul, to Monsieur Dorlange, in consideration of a superb mounted lancer that he has cut out for him. Armand on the other hand says that he is ugly, which is incontestable: he declares that he resembles portraits of Danton that he has seen in illustrated histories of the Revolution, and there is some truth in what he says. He says also that in my statuette he has given me the manner of a grisette, which is not in the least true. Hence, never-ending disputes between the darling loves. Just now I was obliged to intervene, telling them that they tired me with their Monsieur Dorlange. Do you not say the same of me, dear madame, who have already written you so much in regard to him, without being able to give you any precise information?

DORLANGE TO MARIE-GASTON.

Paris, April, 1839.

Why do I desert my art, and what do I expect to do in that accursed political galley? That is what

comes of shutting one's self up for years in conjugal convents, my dear lover! The world has progressed meanwhile. For those who have been forgotten at the gate, life has brought about new combinations, and the less we know about them, the more inclined we are to throw the blame on what we do not know. A man is always such an excellent doctor for another's ills! Know then, my dear inquisitive friend, that the resolution for which you call me to account did not originate with me. In presenting myself so unexpectedly in the electoral breach, I simply bow to an inspiration from those in high places. Allowing a gleam of light to find its way into the depths of my everlasting darkness, a father has three-fourths revealed himself to me, and, if I can trust appearances, his position in society is calculated to satisfy the most exacting self-esteem. However, in accordance with the usual course of my life, that revelation is surrounded by circumstances so extraordinary and so romantic as to deserve to be narrated in some detail. As you have been living in Italy two years, visiting the most interesting cities, it seems to me that it would be entirely useless to explain to you what the famous *Café Greco* is, the ordinary resort of pupils of the Academy and artists of all countries during their stay in Rome.

In Paris, on Rue du Coq-Saint-Hororé, there exists a far-off likeness of that institution in a café known for very many years under the name of *Café des Arts*. Two or three times a week I go there to pass

the evening. There I meet several young men, who were students at Rome in my time. They have introduced me to several journalists and men of letters, agreeable and distinguished men all, with whom it is both profitable and pleasant to exchange ideas. In a certain corner where we assemble, all the questions which are calculated to interest serious minds are agitated and discussed; but politics, being of more living interest, is especially privileged to impart warmth to our discussions. In our little club the prevailing tendency is toward democratic opinions: they are represented in their most diverse developments, the phalansterian utopia included. That is enough to tell you that the course of the government is often criticised with severity, and that in our judgments the most absolute freedom of speech holds sway. It was a little more than a year ago that the only waiter who is allowed the honor of waiting upon us took me aside one day, having, as he said, some important information for me.

"You are being watched by the police, monsieur," he said, "and you will do well not to talk always as Saint-Paul did, with your mouth open."

"The police, my good friend! why, what the devil is there for them to watch? All that I say and much more is printed every morning in the newspapers."

"They're watching you all the same. I have noticed it; there's a little old man who takes a great deal of snuff and always sits within earshot of you; when you speak, he seems to listen much more

carefully than he does to the others, and once I even saw him write something in his note-book in marks that were not writing."

"Very good! the first time he comes, you point him out to me."

The first time was no later than the next day. The personage who was pointed out to me was a little man with gray hair, of decidedly shabby exterior, whose face, which was deeply marked with the small-pox, seemed to me to denote a man of fifty. He did in fact resort very frequently to a large snuff-box and seemed to honor all my remarks with a close attention which I might consider very complimentary or very impertinent as I chose. But there was in the whole personality of the alleged police-spy an air of mildness and probity which seemed to advise me to adopt the more indulgent of those two interpretations. When I remarked upon that reassuring circumstance to the man who flattered himself that he had scented a secret agent:

"Parbleu!" said he, "they put on those soft airs in order to disguise their game better."

Two days later, on a Sunday, as I was taking one of those walks through old Paris which you will remember that I have always liked and been addicted to, chance led me, at the hour for vespers, to the church of Saint-Louis en l'Ile, the parish church of the out-of-the-way quarter that bears that name. That church is a monument of no great interest, whatever certain historians may say and

all the *Foreigners' Guides to Paris* after them. I should therefore have done nothing more than pass hurriedly through, had not the remarkable talent of the organist who officiated at the service detained me irresistibly. To tell you that that man's playing realized my ideal is to bestow great praise upon him; for you remember doubtless my subtle distinction between *players* on the organ and organists, the latter a superior order of nobility, to whom I do not grant letters-patent except for good cause. The service at an end, I was curious to see the face of so eminent an artist, banished to such a spot. I went therefore and stationed myself in ambush at the door of the organ-loft, in order to see the virtuoso when he went out. I would have done no more for a crowned head; but, after all, are not great artists the real kings by divine right? Imagine my amazement when, after waiting a few moments, I saw, instead of an entirely strange face, a man who at first awakened a vague remembrance in my mind, and in whom at the second glance I recognized my persistent auditor of the Café des Arts. Nor was that all; behind him walked an almost human creature, and in that shapeless mass, with its twisted legs and its dense, unkempt hair, I detected our former quarterly providence, my banker, or *money-bringer*,—in a word, our estimable friend, the mysterious dwarf. Nor did I escape his keen eye, and I saw him, with an earnest gesture, point me out to the organist. The latter, with a hasty movement, whose whole significance evidently did not

occur to him, turned abruptly and looked at me, but went his way without any further demonstration. Meanwhile the deformed man, whom by that circumstance I readily recognized as an employé of the *house*, approached the dispenser of holy water and offered him a pinch of snuff; then, without honoring me farther with his attention, he limped to a concealed door which opened into the lower regions of the church, and disappeared. The pains that the man had taken to call the organist's attention to my presence was a revelation to me. Evidently the musician was familiar with the curious method employed to hand me my allowance, which had continued to be religiously served out to me on my return from Rome, and until the time when I was placed above want by a number of orders. Something no less probable was that the man who was in the secret of that financial mystery was the depositary of many other secrets; I was the more eager to obtain an explanation from him, because, having reached the point where I was able to live on my own resources, I no longer had reason to dread that my curiosity would be punished by the withdrawal of the subsidy, with which I had been threatened at another time. Forming a resolution at once, therefore, I darted after the organist; when I passed out of the church door he was already out of sight; but, being seconded by chance, which led me in the direction he had taken, I had the good fortune to see him knocking at the door of a house some distance away, as I came out upon Quai de

Béthune. Boldly entering the house after him, I said to the concierge:

"Monsieur l'organiste of Saint-Louis en l'Ile?"

"Monsieur Jacques Bricheteau?"

"Aye, Monsieur Jacques Bricheteau; does he live here?"

"On the fourth floor above the entre-sol, left-hand door. By the way, he has just come in, you may overtake him on the stairs."

Fast as I went, my man's key was already in the lock when I overtook him.

"Have I the honor of speaking to Monsieur Jacques Bricheteau?" I made haste to say.

"I don't know him," he replied audaciously, giving the key a double turn.

"Perhaps I do not pronounce the name correctly, but monsieur l'organiste of Saint-Louis en l'Ile?"

"I have never heard there was an organist in the house."

"I ask your pardon, monsieur, there is one; the concierge just told me so. Moreover, it surely was you whom I saw come from the organ-loft just now, escorted, parbleu! by a person—"

Even before I had finished my sentence, my singular interlocutor parted company with me by entering his room and closing the door. For a moment I believed I was mistaken; but, upon reflection, I saw that it was impossible. Moreover, was I not dealing with a man who had given proofs of unexampled secretiveness for many years? It was plain therefore that he desperately avoided a

meeting with me, and that I was not mistaken. Thereupon I began to pull his bell violently, determined to triumph by my persistence over the plea in bar set up against me. For some time the besieged endured in patience the uproar I was making at his door; but suddenly I noticed that the bell had ceased to ring. Evidently it had been muffled; my obstinate friend still refusing to open, the only way of entering into communication with him was to burst open the door. But that would hardly do. I went down to the concierge, and told him of my ill-fortune without telling him of the circumstances that explained it; in that way I invited his confidence and made an opening through which to procure some information concerning the impenetrable Monsieur Jacques Bricheteau. Although furnished with all the readiness I could desire, that information shed no light on the situation. The sum of it was that Monsieur Bricheteau was a quiet, gentlemanly lodger, but very uncommunicative; although he paid his rent very promptly, he seemed not to be in easy circumstances, had not even a housekeeper to wait upon him and did not take his meals at home. As he went out every morning before ten and did not return until evening, he probably was employed in an office or gave music lessons at pupils' houses. There was one detail in all this crop of vague and useless facts that seemed to be of some slight interest. For some months past, Monsieur Jacques Bricheteau had frequently received voluminous letters, which, in

view of the large amount charged for postage, might be supposed to come from distant countries; but, despite his good-will, the worthy concierge had never succeeded in deciphering the stamp indicating the point of departure; and, in any event, the name of the country, which he had very imperfectly made out, had entirely gone from his memory; thus, for the moment, that fact, which might have been instructive, was of absolutely no value. When I returned home, I persuaded myself that a pathetic epistle addressed to my refractory musician would have the effect of prevailing upon him to receive me. Mingling a shade of intimidation with my imploring sentences, I did not leave him in ignorance of my well-fixed determination to fathom at any cost the mystery which weighed upon my life, and to which he seemed to possess the key. Now that I had driven an entering wedge into that secret, it was for him to consider if my desperate efforts, as I rushed blindly into that unknown territory, would not entail much more inconvenience than the frank explanation into which I earnestly conjured him to enter with me.

Having thus set forth my ultimatum, I presented myself at Monsieur Jacques Bricheteau's domicile the next morning before nine o'clock, in order that it might reach his hands with the least possible delay. But, being a monster of discretion, or having some utterly inexplicable motive for avoiding a meeting with me, the maestro, after paying his rent for the current and the ensuing quarters, had sent

his furniture away at daybreak, and it was very clear that he paid handsomely for the silence of the men employed to assist in that sudden change of abode, for the concierge was unable to learn from them the name of the street to which his tenant had emigrated. The men in question did not belong in the quarter, by the way; consequently there was no chance of finding them later and making them speak. Impelled by curiosity, which had at last become as keen as my own, the concierge had devised a means of satisfying it. That means, which was not very high-minded, consisted in following, at a distance, the van upon which the musician's household goods were loaded. But the devil of a man thought of everything; and, he had cruised off and on in front of the door, keeping the too-zealous concierge in sight, until his porters had gained a sufficient start to be in no danger of being traced. However, notwithstanding my slippery adversary's obstinacy and adroitness, I did not consider myself beaten. I felt that I still had a hold upon him by means of the organ at Saint-Louis; and on the following Sunday, before the end of high mass, I was stationed at the door of the loft, determined not to let the sphinx go until I had made him speak to me. But another disappointment was in store for me: Monsieur Jacques Bricheteau had sent one of his pupils to fill his place, and for three Sundays in succession the same state of affairs existed. On the fourth Sunday I determined to accost the substitute and ask him if the maestro was sick.

"No, monsieur, Monsieur Bricheteau has taken a leave of absence; he has gone away for some little time on a matter of business."

"Where can he be written to, in that case?"

"I am not quite sure; I should say, however, that you might address your letter to his rooms, close by, on Quai de Béthune."

"But he has moved; didn't you know it?"

"No, I did not indeed; where does he live?"

I was very lucky: here I was seeking information from a man who, when I questioned him, asked me to enlighten him! As if to complete my discomfiture, while I was seeking for light in such a holy spot, I saw the damned deaf-mute in the distance, watching me and apparently laughing at me. Luckily for my impatience and my curiosity, which became more intense with every delay, and were gradually attaining a truly disquieting pitch, a ray of light appeared. A few days after my last disappointment, a letter reached me, and, being more skilful than the concierge on Quai de Béthune, I was able to make out at first glance that it was postmarked Stockholm, SWEDEN—a fact that did not surprise me particularly. At Rome I had been honored with the friendship of Thorwaldsen, the great Swedish sculptor, and I had often met fellow-countrymen of his in his studio; it was some order perhaps that had come to me through his kind offices; but fancy my surprise and emotion, when, having broken the seal, my eyes fell upon these words: *Monsieur my son.* The letter was a long one

and I had not the patience to read it through before ascertaining what name I was entitled to bear. So I turned hurriedly to the signature first of all: did not the words *Monsieur my son*, which I had seen quoted several times in history as used by kings in addressing their offspring, seem to denote the most aristocratic origin? But my disappointment was complete: of signature there was none at all.

"Monsieur my son," said my anonymous father, "I do not regret that, by your passionate persistence in attempting to ascertain the secret of your birth, you have compelled the person who had charge of you during your boyhood to come here and confer with me concerning the course which that unruly and perilous curiosity might impose upon us. For a long time I have cherished a thought which has reached maturity to-day, and its execution has been much more satisfactorily provided for by spoken words, than it could have been by correspondence. Almost immediately after your birth, which cost your mother her life, being forced to expatriate myself, I made a handsome fortune in a foreign country and I occupy an eminent position in the government of that country. I look forward to the moment when, being free to restore my name to you, I shall be able at the same time to procure for you the reversion of the exalted post at which I have arrived. But the reputation which, I am informed, you are in a fair way to acquire in art, would not be a sufficient recommendation to ensure your elevation to that eminence; I desire therefore that you should enter political life; and as there are no two ways of becoming a man of prominence in that career, under the present institutions of France, you must be a deputy. I know that you are not of lawful age, and that you do not pay the requisite tax. But in a year you will be thirty years old and that is just the time necessary to qualify you, after becoming a landholder. To-morrow, you may call upon Mongenod Frères, bankers,

Rue de la Victoire; the sum of two hundred and fifty thousand francs will be paid over to you: you must employ it at once in the purchase of an estate, using the balance to acquire an interest in some newspaper, which, when the time comes, will support your candidacy, and for another purpose which will be explained below. Your political capacity is guaranteed by the person, who, with a disinterested zeal which I can never adequately requite, has watched over your friendless youth. For some time past he has followed you and listened to you, and he is sure that you will make a praiseworthy figure in the tribune. Your opinions, of a liberalism which is at once fervent and moderate, are agreeable to me, and thus far you have, without knowing it, played my hand very skilfully.

"I do not tell you as yet the probable place of your election; the adroit hand that is secretly laying plans to ensure it, has the greater chance of success, the more stealthy and shrouded in darkness its proceedings are; but its success may be in part assured by the execution of a task which I commend to you and urge you to undertake, without evidence of astonishment and without comment, despite its apparent singularity. For the present you will continue to be a sculptor, and with the talent of which you have given proof you will proceed to make a statue of Sainte Ursule for us. It is a subject lacking neither in poetry nor in interest; Sainte Ursule, virgin and martyr, was, according to general belief, the daughter of a prince of Great Britain. Martyrized, toward the close of the fifth century, at Cologne, she was the superior of a convent of women, whom the common people in their innocence called the *Eleven Thousand Virgins;* later she became the patron saint of the order of Ursulines, to which she gave her name, and also of the famous house of Sorbonne. A skilful artist like you can, it seems, to me, turn all these details to good advantage. Without knowing the constituency whose representative you are to become, it will be advisable for you to allow your political opinions to become known at once, as well as your purpose of obtaining a seat in the Chamber.

But the one thing that I cannot urge upon you too strenuously, is absolute secrecy concerning the communication made to you to-day, as well as patient submission to your present position. In Heaven's name, leave my representative in peace, and, restraining a curiosity that might, I give you fair warning, bring the greatest disasters upon you, await the gradual and tranquil opening of the brilliant future for which you are destined. By refusing to fall in with my plans, you would deprive yourself of all chance of ever probing the mystery which you have exhibited such an intense eagerness to probe; but I do not choose to admit even the possibility of any resistance on your part, I prefer to believe in your unquestioning deference to the wishes of a father who will look upon that day as the happiest of his life, on which he is at last privileged to make himself known to you.

"P. S.—Your statue is intended for the chapel of a convent of Ursuline nuns, and must be of marble. Height, one metre, seven hundred and six millimetres, in other words, five feet three inches. As it is not to be placed in a niche, do not slight any portion of it. The cost will be charged to the two hundred and fifty thousand francs referred to in the present letter."

The *present* letter left me dissatisfied and cold: it deprived me of a long-cherished hope, that of finding some day a mother as loving as yours, whose blessed affection you have so often told me of, my dear friend. After all, only a sort of half-light was thrown upon the mists of my existence, nor did it even inform me whether I was or not the offspring of a legitimate union. It seemed to me, too, that the paternal hints had a very imperious and very despotic sound as addressed to a man of my years. Was it not an extraordinary thing to turn my life inside out, as they used, at school, to make us turn

our coats inside out by way of punishment? My first impulse was to urge upon myself all the arguments that might have been urged by you or by others, against my adopting politics as a vocation. However, curiosity impelled me to call upon Messieurs Mongenod, and when I found there, in genuine, current funds, the two hundred and fifty thousand francs of which I had been advised, I was led to reason in another fashion. I reflected that a will which incurred the expense of advancing that amount at the outset, must be very much in earnest; inasmuch as it knew the whole story and I knew nothing, it seemed to me that to elect to enter into a struggle with it was neither very sensible nor very opportune. Had I, in fact, any real repugnance to the course marked out for me? No; political questions have always interested me greatly, to a certain point, and if my electoral venture should come to nothing, I would return to my art, a no more ridiculous figure than all the ambitions that are brought into the world still-born with every new legislature. So I purchased the estate, and, having become a shareholder in *Le National*, I found there some encouragement for my political aspirations, together with the certain assurance of hearty support when I shall have disclosed the seat of my candidacy, concerning which it has not been difficult for me to maintain absolute silence hitherto. I have also finished the *Sainte Ursule*, and now I am awaiting fresh instructions, which I must say seem to me very long in coming, now

that I have bruited abroad my parliamentary ambition, and that the commotion of an approaching general election, for which I am fully prepared, has already begun. I do not need, in view of the injunctions of paternal prudence, to request of you absolute discretion touching this whole subject. That is a virtue of which, to my knowledge, you are altogether too distinguished an exponent to require me to preach to you. But I am unquestionably wrong, my dear friend, to indulge in these malicious allusions to our past, for I am your debtor at this moment in a greater degree than you imagine. To some slight extent from interest in me, and very largely from the general aversion inspired by your ex-brother-in-law's arrogance, at the time of my wound the democratic party came in a body to inscribe their names at my house, and there can be no doubt that my candidacy has gained ground by reason of the noise made by this duel, which has certainly noised my name abroad most effectively. And so a truce to your everlasting gratitude; don't you see that it is I who am your debtor?

*

DORLANGE TO MARIE-GASTON

Paris, April, 1839.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am still playing, as well as I may, my rôle of candidate without a constituency; my friends are surprised at it, and I myself am anxious, for the general election comes off in a few weeks, and if all this mysterious preparation is destined to come to naught, consider, I beg you, what a fine figure I shall cut before Monsieur Bixiou, of whose malicious remarks you wrote me! One thought consoles me, however: it seems to me very unlikely that two hundred and fifty thousand francs should be sown in my electoral furrow, without an attempt, at least, to reap some harvest; perhaps, indeed, to consider the matter in a more favorable light, this moderation on the part of those who are working for me by stealth and with so little apparent warmth, should be understood to denote great confidence of success. However that may be, this long suspense keeps me in a state of idleness which is most irksome to me; being astride of two existences, so to speak,—one upon which I have not yet entered and one which I have not altogether laid aside,—I have not the heart to undertake any work, and I remind myself of a traveler, who has arrived at the diligence office ahead of time, and doesn't know what to do with himself or how to pass the

interval. You will not complain, I trust, if I turn this *far niente* to the advantage of our correspondence, and, faith! as I have the leisure, I will take up two points in your last letter, to which it did not at first seem to me worth while to pay any great attention. On the one hand, you notified me that my parliamentary aspirations had not the approval of Monsieur Bixiou; on the other hand, you hinted that I might incur the risk of falling in love with Madame de l'Estorade, if I were not already in that condition. Let us first deal with Monsieur Bixiou's august disapprobation,—Monsieur Mirabeau's august treason was what people used to say.

I will describe the man to you in a single word: Monsieur Bixiou is envious. He unquestionably has the making of a great artist in him; but, in the ordering of his existence, the belly has killed the heart and the brain, and by virtue of the domination of fleshly appetites, he has become fixed, for good and all, in the calling of a *caricaturist*, that is to say, in the condition of a man who, from day to day, wastes his energies on trivial productions, genuine convict labor, which enable him to live merrily, but bring with them no consideration and no promise for the future. An abortive and forever impotent genius, he has in his mind, as upon his face, the eternal, despairing grimace which the mind of man has always instinctively attributed to fallen angels. Just as the spirit of darkness prefers to attack the great saints, who remind him more painfully of the angelic nature from which he fell, so Monsieur

Bixiou delights to cast his slaver upon the talents and characters in which he divines strength and vigor and a boldly formed resolution not to throw themselves away as he has done. But there is one fact that should reassure you a little concerning his calumnious statement and his malicious slanders,—for, from the story Monsieur de l'Estorade told you, I see that he is undertaking to play both games,—and that is that, at the very time when he is busying himself most entertainingly in performing a burlesque autopsy upon me, he is simply an obedient marionette in my hands, a puppet whose wires I hold, and whom I make chatter at my will. Being satisfied that a little publicity should be given in advance to my vocation of statesman, I thought of procuring a few public shouters, *strong in the jaw*, as Madame Pernelle says, and well versed in the art of giving tongue. Among those cattle-show trumpeters, if I had known of one with a shriller note and more deafening execution than my Bixiou, I should have given the preference to that one. I took advantage of the malevolent curiosity that constantly impels that amiable moth to insinuate himself into all the studios, to overwhelm him with my confidence; I told him everything, my good fortune, the two hundred and fifty thousand francs, which I attributed solely to a lucky turn on the Bourse, all my plans for my course in Parliament, and even the number of the house I had bought. I am very much mistaken if he didn't write that number down somewhere in his memorandum-book.

That, it seems to me, is enough to throw a little cold water on the admiration of his auditors of the Montcornet salon, and to prove that that terrible chatterer is not altogether a *marvelously accurate bureau of information!* As for my political horoscope, which he deigned to take the trouble to cast, I cannot say that his astrology is entirely lacking in truth, strictly speaking. It is very certain that, with my purpose not to keep perfectly in step with any party, I am likely to reach the situation so well summed up by an advocate, the successor of Monsieur de la Palisse, when he exclaimed with burlesque fervor: "What do you do, messieurs, when you place a man in solitude? You isolate him." Isolation will probably be my lot at the outset, and the artist's life, in which one lives alone, in which one depends upon himself for everything, like the Immortal Creator whose work we strive to copy, has predisposed me only too thoroughly to accept and enjoy that situation. But even if, because of it, I am to be deprived, especially at the beginning, of all influence in the lobbies, perhaps it will be of service to me in the tribune, for there I shall speak with all my force and with perfect freedom. Having no entanglements to reckon with, no wretched little party disputes, there will be nothing to prevent my being the man that I am and expressing in their blessed crudity all the ideas that I believe to be sound and just. I know very well that those poor little truths do not always find the time propitious for spreading contagion among an

assemblage of men, or even for obtaining a respectful hearing. But have you not noticed, too, that, if you know how to grasp opportunities, you come at last to those days which are, so to speak, the fête-days of morality and intelligence, when worthy thoughts triumph naturally, almost without effort? On such days, being listened to by the most ill-affected, you make them good by virtue of your own goodness, and well-disposed, temporarily at least, to all that is upright and true and elevated. I do not blind my eyes to the fact that, while a man may gain some consideration and some fame as an orator by the course I have marked out, he will not conduct a successful hunt for a portfolio nor acquire the reputation of a practical man, to which it has become fashionable to sacrifice so much in these days. But, if I have no influence within reach of my arm, I shall bring down something at long range, because, most of the time, I shall speak out of the window, outside of the confined, stifling sphere of parliamentary life, over the head of its paltry passions and its petty selfish interests. Now, that sort of success will meet the requirements of the designs which the paternal good-will seems to have upon me. The desideratum seems to be that I should make a noise, that my name should resound. From that standpoint politics has an artistic side which, upon my word! will not be too flagrantly out of joint with my past.

Now let us come to another subject, that of my passion, already born or to be born, for Madame de

l'Estorade. This is your very judicious reasoning on that subject: In 1837, when you started for Italy, Madame de l'Estorade was still in the full flower of her beauty. With the calm, passionless existence that has always been hers, it seems unlikely that the burden of two more years could have made much impression on her, and my strange and audacious persistence in seeking inspiration from her proves that time has not moved, so far as that privileged person is concerned. Therefore, if the harm is not already done, I must be on my guard; from the admiration of the artist to that of the man is but a step, and the story of the late Pygmalion appeals to me to exert all my prudence. —In the first place, O learned and mythological doctor, I might call your attention to this fact: the party principally interested, being upon the spot and much better placed than you to estimate the dangers of the situation doesn't seem to feel the slightest anxiety. Monsieur de l'Estorade has but one complaint against me, he considers my visits too infrequent and, in his eyes, my discretion is pure boorishness.—"*Parbleu!*" you will exclaim, "a husband; why, he is, like all husbands, the last to know that his wife is being made love to!" —Very good. But what of Madame de l'Estorade's great reputation for virtue, what of that cold, almost selfish common sense that served so often to calm the ardent and passionate petulance of another person who was well known to you? Will you not agree, furthermore, that the love for her children, carried

to the pitch of fervor, I had almost said of fanaticism, in which it appears in her, is an almost infallible safeguard? For her, well. But it is not her peace of mind, but mine, with which your friendship is concerned, and if Pygmalion had not succeeded in breathing life into his statue, what a fine existence his love would have laid out for him! I might respond to your charitable anxiety by referring to my principles, although the word and the thing have both gone sadly out of fashion; to a certain absurd respect which I have always professed for conjugal fidelity; to the very natural tendency of the serious enterprise in which I am about to engage to divert my thoughts from all vagaries of the imagination. I might inform you, too, that, if not by virtue of eminent talent, at least by virtue of all the tendencies of my mind and my nature, I belong to that strong-minded, serious school of artists of another age, who, realizing that art is long and life is short—*ars longa et vita brevis*—did not make the mistake of wasting their time and their creative power in silly, tasteless intrigues. But I have something better than all this to offer you. As Monsieur de l'Estorade has not left you in ignorance of any of the romantic circumstances attending my meeting with his wife, you are entitled to know that a memory first led me to dog the steps of that lovely model. Now, that memory, at the same time that it drew me toward the fair countess, is efficacious beyond anything you can imagine in keeping me away from her. That statement seems to you cruelly mystical and

enigmatical, does it not? but wait a little and I will explain myself. If you had not thought it best to break the thread that had long bound our lives together, I should not have so many arrears to make up to-day; but as you have made a settlement of accounts between us necessary, you must take your share of all my stories, my dear boy, and make up your mind to listen bravely.

In 1835, the last year of my stay in Rome, I was quite intimate with a comrade of the Academy named Desroziers. He was a musician, of talented and observing mind, who would probably have attained great eminence in his art, had he not been carried off by typhoid fever the year after my departure. One day when it had occurred to us to extend as far as Sicily one of the trips permitted by the regulations of the school, we found that we were absolutely penniless, and as we scoured the streets of Rome, busily seeking some means of restoring a little prosperity to our finances, we happened to pass in front of the Braschi Palace. Its great gates stood open, giving access to a constant stream of persons of every condition, who passed in and out without a break.

"Parbleu!" said Desroziers, "this is our chance!"

And without his deigning to explain where he was taking me, there we were, following the crowd, and entering the palace with it.

Having ascended a superb marble staircase and passed through a long succession of apartments very poorly furnished, as Roman palaces generally are,

their whole splendor consisting in ceilings, pictures, statues and other works of art, we reached a room hung entirely in black and illuminated by a great quantity of tapers. It was, as you already understand, a chamber of death. In the centre, upon a platform surmounted by a rich canopy, reposed a *thing*, at once the most hideous and the most grotesque that you can imagine: fancy a little old man whose hands and face were dried up and withered to such a degree that a mummy would have seemed appetizingly corpulent beside him. Dressed in black satin short clothes, a coat of violet velvet cut *à la française*, and a white waistcoat with gold embroidery, from which protruded an enormous frill of English point, the skeleton had his cheeks covered with a thick layer of rouge, which made the parchment-like hues of the rest of the skin stand out so much the more prominently; and then, on top of a blond wig with little curls, an enormous plumed hat, in which he seemed to be swallowed up, was cocked rakishly over his ear in such a way as to provoke the risibility of the most respectful visitors, do what they would. After a glance at that absurd and deplorable exhibition, the indispensable preliminary of funeral services in the etiquette of the Roman aristocracy:

"That is the end!" Desroziers said to me; "now, come and see the beginning."

Thereupon, without answering any of my questions, because he desired to produce a dramatic effect, he led me to the Albani Museum, and,

stationing me in front of a statue of Adonis reclining on a lion's skin, he said:

"What do you think of that?"

"That," I replied, after a first glance, "why, it's very fine, as an antique."

"Antique as I am!" rejoined Desroziers; and he pointed out the signature on a corner of the pedestal: SARRASINE, 1758.—See *Sarrasine*.—

"Antique or not, it's a masterpiece," I said, when I had scrutinized that beautiful creation from every point of view; "but how are this masterpiece and the hideous caricature you took me to see just now, going to take us to Sicily?"

"I began, when I first came here, by asking who Sarrasine was."

"That is needless," I replied; "I have heard of this statue before; it had slipped my memory, because, when I came to see it, the Albani Museum was closed for repairs, as the theatre posters say. Sarrasine, I was also told, was a pupil of Bouchardon, and, like ourselves, a pensioner of the King of Rome, where he died in the first six months following his arrival."

"But of what did he die, and how?"

"Of some disease probably," I replied, little thinking that my reply was in some sense prophetic of the fate of him to whom I was speaking.

"Not at all," rejoined Desroziers, "artists don't die in such a stupid way as that."

And he gave me the following details:

"A man of genius, but of fierce passions, Sarrasine,

almost immediately after his arrival in Rome, fell in love with the leading singer of the Argentina theatre, named La Zambinella. At the time that that passion took possession of him, the Pope did not allow women to appear on the stage in Rome; but, by favor of a surgical operation, well known and commonly practised in the Orient, the difficulty was overcome. La Zambinella was one of the most marvelous products of that industry. Driven frantic by the knowledge of the manner in which his love had gone astray, Sarrasine, who, before he obtained that terrible knowledge, had carved in his imagination a statue of his apocryphal mistress, was on the point of killing him; but he was protected by an exalted personage, who, taking the initiative, cooled the savage sculptor's blood by dint of two or three well-directed thrusts with the stiletto. La Zambinella did not approve of that violent proceeding, but he continued none the less to sing at the Argentina theatre and all the theatres of Europe, amassing a princely fortune. When the time arrived for him to leave the stage, he had become a vain, timid little old man, but wilful and capricious as a woman. Bestowing all the affection of which he was capable upon a marvelously beautiful niece, he had placed her at the head of his house; she was the Madame Denis of that strange Voltaire, and was destined to inherit his immense wealth. Having fallen in love with a Frenchman named the Comte de Lanty, who was supposed to be a skilful chemist although very little was known concerning his antecedents, the

lovely heiress had with great difficulty obtained her uncle's permission to marry the man of her choice. But when the uncle, weary of the struggle, gave his consent to the marriage, he stipulated that his niece should not leave him. In order to make more sure of the execution of that stipulation, he gave her no dowry nor did he part with the slightest portion of his fortune, although he expended it with lavish hand for the enjoyment of his household. Suffering intensely from ennui, and acting constantly under the spur of an unconquerable longing for movement, the strange old man set up his establishment in the most distant quarters of the globe, hauling in his train the young husband and wife, of whose respect and affection he had made sure, at least during his life. In 1829, when he was almost a hundred years old, and in a sort of dotage, although his mind was still clear when he was listening to music, there was a question of settlements to be discussed with the Lantys concerning two children born of the marriage, and he took up his abode in a superb house in Faubourg Saint-Honoré. All Paris flocked thither, attracted by the still brilliant beauty of Madame de Lanty, by the artless charms of her daughter Marianina, by the splendor of fêtes that were truly regal in their magnificence, and by an indescribable odor of the unknown with which the atmosphere surrounding the mysterious strangers was laden. Conjecture was especially rife concerning the little old man, who was treated with the utmost care and consideration and at the same time

seemed to be kept in private confinement, and who glided sometimes like a spectre through the sumptuous festivities, from which they strove to keep him away, and which he seemed to take malicious delight in marring with his ghostlike appearances. The musket-shots of July, 1830, put the phantom to flight, and, upon leaving Paris, to the despair of the Lantys, he had obstinately insisted upon returning to Rome, his native city, where his presence revived all the humiliating memories of his past. But Rome was his last station, he died here, and it was he whom we saw so absurdly decked out in the death-chamber at the Braschi Palace, and he again whom we had before our eyes at the Albani Museum, in all the splendor of his youth."

The details given me by Desroziers were interesting beyond question, and, furthermore, it was impossible to impart more dramatic effect to a contrast, but how was this to take us to Sicily? that was still the question.

"You have all the talent required to make a copy of that statue, have you not?" said Desroziers.

"I like to think so, at all events."

"And I am sure of it, for my part. So obtain permission from the director and set to work at once; I have a customer for the copy."

"Who will buy it of us, pray?"

"*Parbleu!* the Comte de Lanty; I give lessons in harmony to his daughter, and when I have announced in his house, that somebody is making a

fine copy of the *Adonis*, they will not rest until they have bought it."

"But won't that look a little like blackmail?"

"Not at all. At one time the Lantys themselves had a copy painted by Vien, because they couldn't buy the work itself, which the Albani Museum refused to part with at any price. Several attempts at reproduction have also been made by sculptors on orders from them; all have failed. Succeed, and you will be paid enough to make the trip to Sicily forty times over, for you will have gratified a whim which was in despair of itself, and which, even after the money is paid, will consider itself still in your debt."

Two days later the work had begun, and, as it was to my taste, I hurried it forward so eagerly that, at the end of three weeks, the Lanty family, having invaded my studio, in deep mourning, under Desroziers's guidance, were able to inspect a rough model far advanced toward completion. Monsieur de Lanty should have seemed to me an accomplished connoisseur, for he expressed himself satisfied with my work. Marianina, who had been her great-uncle's favorite and was specially mentioned in his will, seemed more delighted than all the others with the success of my work. Marianina was at that time a girl of about twenty-one; I will not draw her portrait for you, as you know Madame de l'Estorade, whose resemblance to her is most striking. The charming girl, already an accomplished musician, had a remarkable taste for all the

arts. As she came to my studio from time to time, to follow the progress of my work, which, by the way, was not finished, owing to an accident, she developed a taste for sculpture, like the Princesse Marie d'Orléans; and until the departure of her family, which took place a few months before I myself left Rome, Mademoiselle de Lanty took lessons from me. I was a thousand leagues from any thought of re-enacting Saint-Preux or Abelard; but I must say that I had rare good fortune in imparting my knowledge. The pupil was so intelligent, so prompt to take advantage of the slightest hints; her disposition was so playful and her judgment at the same time so ripe; her voice, when she sang, went so straight to the depths of the heart; and at every instant I learned, from the servants, who adored her, of so many noble, high-souled, charitable acts, that, except for my knowledge of her immense fortune, which kept me at a distance, I might have incurred something of the danger against which you seek to warn me to-day. On the other hand, Marianina considered my method of instruction luminous. Being before long received in the house on a more or less familiar footing, I noticed that my fair pupil did not seem to dislike my conversation. When the question arose whether she and her family should return to Paris to live, she suddenly discovered innumerable attractions in Rome as a place of abode, and manifested genuine regret at leaving it; and I believe, God forgive me! that, when I took leave of her, something like a tear

was glistening in her eye. When I returned to Paris, my first call was at the Hôtel Lanty.

Marianina was too well-bred and by nature too kindly to go so far as to be discourteous or contemptuous to anyone; but at the outset I noticed that a singularly cold and restrained bearing was substituted for her former engaging and friendly ease of manner. What seemed probable to me was that the liking she might have manifested, I will not say for my person, but for my conversation and my intellectual powers, had been noticed by her family. She had probably been lectured on the subject, and she seemed to me to be acting in obedience to strict orders, which the stern and by no means gracious manner of Monsieur and Madame de Lanty enabled me readily to divine. Some months later, at the Salon of 1837, I thought that I had a confirmation of that theory. I had exhibited a statue which made some sensation. There was constantly a crowd around my *Pandora*. I frequently went there *incognito*, and lost myself in the throng, to enjoy my glory and harvest my triumph on the spot. One Wednesday, a society day, I saw the Lanty family approaching in the distance. The mother was hanging on the arm of a well-known *lion*, Comte Maxime de Trailles; Marianina had her brother for a cavalier; while Monsieur de Lanty, who looked careworn, as usual, was the man in the ballad of *Malbrouck*, you know, the one who carries nothing. By clever manœuvring, while my people were working their way through the crowd, I glided

behind them so that I could hear their impressions without being seen. *Nil admirari*, to acknowledge no beauty in anything, is the natural instinct of every man of fashion: and so, after a very cursory inspection of my work, Monsieur de Trailles began to discover the most shocking faults in it; his judgment was rendered in a loud and very distinct voice, so that no part of his condemnation would be lost upon anyone within a certain radius. Marianina, having a different opinion, listened to the profound critic with divers shrugs of the shoulders; and, when he had finished, she said to him:

"How lucky that you came with us! Except for your enlightened judgment, I was quite capable of considering the statue an admirable piece of work, in common with the excellent public; really, it's too bad that the author is not here to learn his trade from you."

"Why, but he is right there behind you," observed a stout woman to whom I had just bowed, laughing heartily; she was an ex-coachmaker's wife, of whom I hire the house where my studio is.

Instinct triumphed over reflection, and Marianina involuntarily turned; when she saw me the blood rushed to her face; I had no more than time to make my escape. A girl who took my part so boldly, and who manifested such confusion upon being surprised in the expression of her good-will, was certainly not likely to object to the sight of me; and as, at the time of my first visit, I had received a very chilly welcome, I determined to make another trial at the

close of the exhibition, having meanwhile been made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor. Perhaps the distinction that had been conferred upon me would entitle me to more courteous treatment at the hands of the haughty Monsieur de Lanty.

I was received by an old servant of whom Marianina was very fond.

"Ah! monsieur," he said, "very sad things have happened here!"

"What do you mean?" I asked eagerly.

"I will announce monsieur," was his only reply.

A moment later I was ushered into Monsieur de Lanty's study.

He looked at me without rising, and greeted me with this apostrophe:

"I consider you a brave man, monsieur, to have thought of making your appearance here."

"Why, I have not as yet met with such a reception as to consider that I needed so much courage."

"You have come, doubtless," continued Monsieur de Lanty, "to recover what you were awkward enough to leave in our hands; I will return the precious object to you, monsieur."

He rose, went to his desk and took from a drawer a dainty little letter-case, which he handed to me.

"Ah! to be sure," he added, as I manifested a sort of stupefaction, "the letters are not there; I thought you would allow me to keep them."

"This letter-case, letters!—this is all an enigma to me, monsieur."

At that moment Madame de Lanty entered the room.

"What do you want?" demanded her husband sharply.

"I was told that monsieur was here," she replied, "and as I foresaw that you and he would have an unpleasant explanation, I do my duty as a wife by coming to stand between you."

"It will not be difficult, madame," I said, "for your presence to impose the greatest moderation upon my conduct, for what is taking place is evidently the result of a misunderstanding."

"Ah! this is too much," said Monsieur de Lanty, returning to the drawer from which the letter-case had made its appearance.

A moment later, having abruptly placed in my hands a small package of letters tied together with a pink ribbon, he continued:

"I imagine that that will put an end to the misunderstanding."

I looked at the letters; they bore post-office stamps and were all superscribed: *To Monsieur Dorlange*, the three words being written in a woman's hand which was entirely unfamiliar to me.

"You are better informed than I, monsieur," I replied coldly; "you have in your possession letters that seem to belong to me but that have never been in my possession."

"Faith," cried Monsieur de Lanty, "I must confess that you are a wonderful actor; I have

never seen anyone feign innocence and astonishment so naturally."

While he was uttering that sentence, Madame de Lanty had adroitly taken her place behind her husband, and, by means of supplicating and perfectly comprehensible pantomine, was imploring me to accept the position against which I was defending myself. My honor was too deeply involved, and I had too little understanding of what I was doing, to be disposed to surrender at the first stroke. So I tried to look about a little and take my bearings.

"But, monsieur," I demanded, "from whom are the letters? who wrote them to me?"

"From whom are the letters?" cried Monsieur de Lanty, in a tone that ceased to be ironical to become indignant.

"It is useless to deny, monsieur," interposed Madame de Lanty, "Marianina has confessed everything."

"Do you say that Mademoiselle Marianina wrote these letters?" I rejoined. "Then there is a very simple expedient; let me be taken into her presence; from her mouth the most improbable facts will be accepted by me as true."

"A very gallant trick," retorted Monsieur de Lanty; "but Marianina is no longer here, she is in a convent, safe forever from your enterprises and the mad impulses of her absurd passion. If that is what you came here to find out, you have your information. Now let us have done with it, for I do not conceal from you that there is a limit to my

patience and self-restraint, even if there be none to your impertinence."

"Monsieur!" I exclaimed excitedly.

But when I saw Madame de Lanty go through the form of imploring me on her knees, I reflected that perhaps Marianina's future might be influenced by the attitude I assumed. Moreover, Monsieur de Lanty was slender and frail, he was nearing sixty and seemed very conscientiously persuaded of his imaginary outrage; so I did not take up his harsh words, but took my leave without further incident.

I had hoped that the old servant from whom I had had a sort of foretaste of this scene would be in my way when I went out and give me some explanations; but I did not see him, and I remained, utterly unenlightened, a prey to an infinitude of conjectures.

I had hardly left my bed the next morning, when Monsieur l'Abbé Fontanon was announced—See *A Double Family*.—I gave orders that he be admitted, and I soon found myself in presence of a tall old man with a bilious complexion, of a stern and gloomy cast of countenance, who, being evidently conscious of his unprepossessing appearance, tries to atone for it by all the refinement of the most exquisite courtesy and by a show of overacted but glacial obsequiousness.

When he had taken a seat, he began: "Madame la Comtesse de Lanty, monsieur, has done me the honor to entrust the guidance of her conscience to me. I have learned from her of a scene which took place yesterday between her husband and yourself.

As prudence forbade her giving you, with her own mouth, certain explanations to which you are unquestionably entitled, I have undertaken to transmit them to you, and it is for that purpose that you see me before you."

"I am listening, monsieur," was my reply.

"A few weeks ago," the abbé continued, "Monsieur de Lanty purchased an estate in the suburbs of Paris, and taking advantage of the first fine spring days, he took possession at once with his whole family. Monsieur de Lanty sleeps little; and one night, while he was lying awake—there being no light in his room—he fancied that he heard footsteps under his window, which he at once threw open, greeting the nocturnal visitor, whose presence he took for granted, with an emphatic: 'Who goes there?' He was not mistaken, there was someone there, someone who did not reply and at once took flight, nor did the two pistol-shots fired by Monsieur de Lanty produce any effect. At first he believed that it was an attempted burglary; but that theory was improbable, for the château was not furnished, the new owners having come there for a very short stay; thieves, who ordinarily investigate, could not expect to find many articles of value there; furthermore, another piece of intelligence turned Monsieur de Lanty's suspicions in an entirely different direction. He learned that, two days after his arrival, *a handsome gentleman* had hired a room at a wineshop in a neighboring village; that the gentleman seemed to shun observation, and that he had gone out

several times at night; after that, it was evidently no longer a question of thieves but of a lover."

"I know no novelist, Monsieur l'Abbé," I said, interrupting him, "who can tell a story better than you."

I hoped by that not entirely truthful comparison to induce the narrator to quicken his pace, for you will understand my impatience to arrive at the point.

"Unfortunately," replied the abbé, "it was a grave reality. You may judge for yourself. Monsieur de Lanty had been watching his daughter for a long while; it seemed as if some fierce passion would soon explode within her. You yourself, first of all, monsieur, caused him some uneasiness at Rome."

"Quite gratuitous, Monsieur l'Abbé," I interposed.

"Yes, I know that in your relations with Mademoiselle de Lanty you have never exceeded the limits of propriety. However, their departure from Rome cut short that first anxiety; but in Paris another person seemed to keep our young brain busily at work, and from moment to moment Monsieur de Lanty proposed to have an explanation with her on that subject. Now, the man with whom she seemed to be fascinated is an audacious, enterprising individual, quite capable of taking any risk in order to compromise an heiress. When questioned as to whether she had, by any frivolous conduct, encouraged or inspired the idea of the insolent proceeding whose perpetrator it was sought to discover, Mademoiselle de Lanty's attitude was calculated to avert all suspicion."

"I would have sworn it!" I cried.

"Wait," continued the abbé. "A maid was thereupon suspected, and she was at once ordered to leave the house. This girl's father is a man of violent temper, and if she returned home under that burden of disgrace, she might expect the harshest treatment. Mademoiselle de Lanty—we must do her that justice—had a Christianlike impulse; she did not choose that an innocent person should pay the penalty for her; she threw herself at her father's feet and confessed that the nocturnal visit was really intended for her, and that, although she had not positively authorized it, she was not altogether surprised by it. Monsieur de Lanty at once mentioned the name of the audacious suitor; but the culprit would not admit that her father was right, and at the same time she refused to substitute another name for the one she disavowed. The day was passed in that struggle, and Monsieur de Lanty hoped to put an end to it by instructing his wife to take his place where he had failed. He judged rightly that there would be more expansiveness, more frankness between mother and daughter. And in fact, when left alone with Madame de Lanty, Marianina at last confessed that her father's suspicions were just; but at the same time she gave a reason for her persistent reticence which was entitled to great consideration. The man whose suit she had encouraged has had several fortunate duels during his life. His birth places him on a footing of perfect equality with Messieurs de Lanty,

he is in the same social circle, and consequently has continual opportunities of meeting them. Were there not great disasters to be dreaded? How could the father or the son tolerate his presence without calling him to account for conduct so insulting to the honor of their house? What was to be done? The imprudent young woman herself suggested this idea: to give Monsieur de Lanty a name which, while allowing his wrath full sway, would not make revenge a necessity."

"I understand," I broke in, "the name of a man who is not *born*, a personage of no consequence, an artist for example, a sculptor or some other low cur of that sort—"

"I think, monsieur," rejoined the abbé, "that you attribute to Mademoiselle de Lanty a feeling that she is very far from entertaining. She has, in my opinion, only too much taste for the arts, and it is that very thing, perhaps, that caused this fatal ebullition of her imagination. The consideration that decided her to take refuge behind your name from the disasters she dreaded was the recollection of Monsieur de Lanty's former suspicions of you; you were a more probable accomplice, I think I can assure you that she saw nothing beyond that."

"But that letter-case, Monsieur l'Abbé, and those letters that played such a strange part in yesterday's scene?"

"All that is another of Marianina's inventions; and although, under the circumstances, her extraordinary mental resources have produced a good

result, it was in that precise direction that her future seemed especially ominous to me, if she remained in the world. When she and Madame de Lanty had agreed that you were to be named as the nocturnal prowler, it became necessary to surround that confession with the most favorable conditions to ensure its success. Instead of making the confession in words, the extraordinary girl conceived the idea of acting it. She passed the night writing the letters that were shown you. Different kinds of paper, the handwriting carefully varied, and even the color of the ink changed—nothing was overlooked by her. When the letters were written, they were placed in the letter-case, which Monsieur de Lanty had never seen; then, after putting the whole package to the nose of a hunting-dog, whose rare intelligence has led to his being invested with the freedom of the house, she threw it into one of the clumps of trees in the park, then returned to undergo the impatient questioning of her father. While an animated discussion was in progress between them, the dog appeared, bringing his mistress the letter-case; observing her admirably well-feigned confusion, Monsieur de Lanty seized the suspicious object, and everything was thereupon made clear to him in accordance with the deception they had carefully arranged for him."

"Did Madame de Lanty tell you all these details?" I asked, with something very like an incredulous air.

"She confided them to me, monsieur, and you yourself were offered proofs of their truth yesterday.

By refusing to accept the situation, you might have compromised the whole success of the plan, and that is why Madame de Lanty intervened. I am instructed by her to thank you for your connivance, passive at least, in that pious falsehood; she thought that she could show her deep gratitude in no better way than by placing the whole secret in your hands, and confiding it to your discretion."

"And Mademoiselle Marianina?" I asked.

"As Monsieur de Lanty told you, she was at once sent to a convent in Italy. In order to avoid all scandal, she is credited with a sudden calling for a religious life. She herself will decide her future by her conduct."

Even if the wound inflicted on my self-esteem by that tale, if true, had been less deep, I should still have doubted it, for does it not seem to you very fanciful? Since then something has come to light which may furnish the key. Marianina's brother has recently married a German lady of a grand-ducal family. Enormous sacrifices must have been demanded of the Lantys to make such an alliance possible, and is it not likely that Marianina, preferred in her great-uncle's will and now disinherited by means of the convent, has had to bear the expense of this princely match? Another suggestion: Marianina may really have entertained for me the sentiment expressed in her letters; she may have been childish enough to write them, without sending them. Some unlucky chance may have led to their being discovered in her hands: then, in order to

punish her, not for having written them, but for having thought them, she was shut up in a convent; and, in order to disgust me with her, they constructed the fable of this other love-affair, in which I was made to play the distasteful rôle of lightning-rod. With these Lantys one may believe anything; in addition to the fact that the head of the family has always seemed to me a very deep character and capable at need of the blackest schemes, just imagine those people, having lain all their lives, so to speak, with the secret of a fortune of base origin —must they not be, by this time, accustomed to all sorts of intrigues, and do you believe that they have any sense of shame as to the methods they employ? I add that the officious intervention of Abbé Fontanon justifies all sorts of evil thoughts. I have made inquiries about him: he is one of those vile priests who are always eager to dip their fingers into family secrets, and he has heretofore made trouble in the family of Monsieur de Granville, who was procureur-général at the royal court of Paris under the Restoration.

However that may be, I do not yet know which of my conjectures is true and which false, nor am I likely to know for a long while. But, as you will understand, the thought of Marianina, hovering over all this darkness, is a luminous point which attracts my eye in my own despite. Ought I to love her? ought I to hate and despise her? That is what I ask myself every day, and on that diet of uncertainty a woman's image has a much better chance, in my

opinion, to establish itself firmly than to fade away. But is it not a diabolical combination that just at this moment my chisel is called upon to produce a pale daughter of the cloister? Does not my memory, in that case, necessarily become my imagination, and could I invent anything other than the besetting image so deeply engraved on my mind? Thereupon appears a Marianina in flesh and blood, and because, for the greater convenience of his work, the artist takes advantage of that favor of chance, he must be supposed by the same stroke to have effected a transfer of his heart; and so, without effort on his part, the glacial Madame de l'Estorade is assumed to be substituted for my charming pupil, though placed in bolder relief by the double halo of forbidden fruit and mystery! In a word, you must have done with your suppositions. The other day, the merest accident prevented my telling her alleged rival the whole story of Mademoiselle de Lanty. If I had any designs upon that woman, who knows how to love nothing but her children, that would be a fine way to pay my court to her, you must agree—to tell her that story!—And so, to sum up, I care as little for Monsieur Bixiou's opinion as for last year's roses. I do not know whether I love Marianina; but I am very sure that I do not love Madame de l'Estorade. That, it seems to me, is a frank and clear reply. Now, let us leave everything to the future, which is the master of us all.

*

COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME OCTAVE DE CAMPS

Paris, April, 1839

DEAR MADAME,

Monsieur Dorlange came last evening to take his leave of us. He starts to-day for Arcis-sur-Aube, where *his* statue is to be unveiled. That is also the place for which the newspapers of the opposition say that he is to be a candidate. Monsieur de l'Estorade declares that a worse choice of a constituency could not have been made, and that it takes away all chance of his election; but that is not the question. Monsieur Dorlange arrived early; I was alone; Monsieur de l'Estorade was dining with the Minister of the Interior, and the children, who had taken a long walk during the day, had themselves asked to be allowed to go to bed earlier than usual. Thus the tête-à-tête interrupted by Madame de la Bastie was resumed in a perfectly natural way, and I was on the point of asking Monsieur Dorlange for the continuation of his story, of which he has as yet told me only the last words, when our old Lucas appeared with a letter for me. It was from my Armand; he informed me that he had been quite ill in the infirmary since morning.

"Order the carriage," I said to Lucas, with the emotion you can imagine.

"But, madame," he replied, "monsieur ordered the carriage for half-past eight, and Tony has already gone."

"Then call a cab for me."

"I don't know if I can find one," said our old servant, who is a great man for raising difficulties; "it has been raining hard for some time."

Without paying any heed to that remark, and without bestowing a thought on Monsieur Dorlange, whom I left sadly perplexed at having to retire without taking leave of me, I went to my bedroom to put on my hat and shawl. Having hastily made my toilet, I returned to the salon, where I found my visitor waiting.

"You will excuse me, monsieur," I said, "for leaving you so abruptly: I am going at once to Collége Henri IV: I could not think of passing the night in the state of anxiety caused by a letter from my son informing me that he has been in the infirmary since morning."

"But surely you are not going to that out-of-the-way quarter alone, in a hired carriage?"

"Lucas will go with me."

At that moment Lucas returned. His prediction had come true, not a cab to be found on the stands; it was raining in torrents. Time was flying; even then it was almost too late to be admitted to the college, where everybody is in bed at nine o'clock.

"We must do something," I said to Lucas; "go and put on some heavy shoes and go with me with an umbrella."

On the instant I saw Lucas's face lengthen; he is no longer young, he likes to be comfortable, and every winter he complains of rheumatism. From several objections that he suggested one after another: that it was very late; that we should *revolutionize* the college; that I should run the risk of taking cold; that Monsieur Armand couldn't be very sick as he was able to write himself,—it was clear that my plan of campaign was not at all agreeable to my venerable companion. Thereupon Monsieur Dorlange politely offered to go in my stead and to return and report; but that middle course did not remove the difficulty, I felt that I must see for myself in order to be reassured. So, after thanking him, I said, authoritatively:

"Come, Lucas, go and get ready, and return at once, for there is one of your observations that is undoubtedly true: it is late."

But Lucas, being thus brought to bay, resolutely raised the standard of revolt.

"It isn't possible," he said, "for madame to go out on foot in such weather, and I have no wish to have monsieur scold me for assenting to such an extraordinary idea."

"So you do not think best to obey me?"

"Madame knows very well that I would be at her service for any reasonable or necessary purpose, even though I had to walk through fire!"

"Of course, warmth is recommended for rheumatism, but rain is bad for it."

Turning thereupon to Monsieur Dorlange, without

listening to the refractory old fellow's reply, I said:

"As you have offered to take this journey alone, I venture to hope that you will not refuse to escort me."

"I am like Lucas," he replied; "it does not seem to me that it is absolutely indispensable for you to take this walk; but as I have no fear of being scolded by Monsieur de l'Estorade, I shall have the honor of accompanying you."

We went out; and as we were going down the stairs, I thought to myself that life is full of strange incidents. Here was a man of whom I was not perfectly sure, who, two months ago, was prowling around me with all the appearance of a pirate, and in whose hands, nevertheless, I was led to place myself in full confidence and under conditions that the most favored lover would hardly have dared to dream of. It was a horrible night in very truth; we had not walked fifty yards before we were drenched, notwithstanding Lucas's enormous umbrella, which Monsieur Dorlange held in such a way as to shelter me at his own expense. At that juncture, a new but fortunate complication arose. A carriage passed us; Monsieur Dorlange hailed the driver; it was empty. To inform my escort that I did not intend to allow him to enter the carriage with me was almost impossible. Not only would such evident distrust have been insulting to the last degree, but I should have degraded myself immensely by exhibiting it, should I not? See, dear madame, how

slippery the downward path is, and how truly it may be said that showers have played into the hands of lovers since the days of Dido and Æneas! It is hard to talk in a cab; the wheels and windows rattle so that you have to raise your voice. Monsieur Dorlange knew, too, that I was suffering keen anxiety; so he had the good taste not to attempt to carry on a regular conversation, and simply broke the silence from time to time, with a sentence or two—a silence which our situation required should not be too absolute. When we reached the college, Monsieur Dorlange, having alighted to assist me, seemed to realize that he was not to go in with me, so he entered the carriage again to wait for me. Monsieur Armand had done me the favor of treating me to a sort of mystification. His serious indisposition reduced itself to a headache, and even that had disappeared as soon as he wrote to me. The doctor, who had seen him during the day, had prescribed an infusion of linden-leaves, for the sake of prescribing something, and had told him that he would be in condition to return to his studies the next day. I had taken a club to kill a fly, and had been guilty of something like a crime, by coming, at an hour when everybody in the establishment who was well had long been in bed, to find monsieur my son still up, and gravely playing a game of chess with one of the hospital attendants. When I returned from my useful expedition, the rain had entirely ceased and the pavements, washed clean by the rain and entirely free from mud, gleamed like silver in the

bright moonlight. My heart had been so oppressed that I felt the need of fresh air. So I requested Monsieur Dorlange to dismiss the carriage and we returned on foot. It was an excellent opportunity for him; between the Panthéon and Rue de Varenne there is time to say many things; but Monsieur Dorlange seemed so little inclined to take advantage of his situation, that, taking Armand's freak for his text, he entered upon a dissertation on the danger of spoiling children; the subject is not an agreeable one to me, as he must have seen from the somewhat chilling manner in which I took part in the conversation.

"Come," I thought, "we may as well have the end of that constantly interrupted story, which resembles Sancho's famous goatherd story, whose special interest lay in its never being told."

So I cut my serious companion short in his theories of education.

"It seems to me," I said, "that this would not be an inopportune time to resume the confidential communication you once began to make to me. Here we are sure that nobody will disturb us."

"I am afraid that I am a wretched story-teller," Monsieur Dorlange replied; "I expended all my energy the other day telling Marie-Gaston the same story."

"But that was contrary to your theory of secrecy," I observed laughingly, "which holds that even a third person is too many."

"Oh! Marie-Gaston and I count as only one; besides, it was necessary to set him right as to the

curious ideas he had conceived concerning you and myself."

"What! concerning me?"

"Yes, he maintains that one is apt to be permanently dazzled by looking too much at the sun."

"Which means, in less metaphorical language?"

"That, in view of the strange incidents by which the honor of your acquaintance has been surrounded in my case, I might very well be in danger of not maintaining my reason and my *sang-froid*, madame, in my relations with you."

"And does your story set at rest Monsieur Marie-Gaston's apprehension?"

"You shall be the judge," was the reply.

Thereupon, without further preamble, he told me a long story, which I do not repeat to you, dear madame, in the first place because it seems to me to have no bearing on your duties as my director, and, secondly, because it involves a family secret which calls for discretion on my part much more urgently than I had at first supposed.

In a word, the substance of the story is that Monsieur Dorlange is in love with the woman who posed in his imagination for his *Sainte Ursule;* but, as I must add that that woman is apparently altogether lost to him, it does not seem at all impossible that he may eventually transfer to me the sentiment which he seems still to feel for her to-day. And so when, having concluded his narrative, he asked me if I did not consider that it was a

triumphant answer to our friend's absurd apprehensions, I replied:

"Modesty makes it my duty to share your feeling of security; and yet they say that in war many missiles kill on the rebound."

"So you believe me to be guilty of the impertinence of which Marie-Gaston does me the honor to suspect me?"

"I do not know that you would be impertinent," I replied, with a suggestion of acidity in my tone, "but in case such a fancy should ever assail your heart, I should look upon you, I confess, as a man to be greatly pitied."

It was a keen thrust.

"Oh, well, madame," he retorted, "do not pity me: in my view a first love is a virus which averts a second attack."

The conversation stopped at that point; his narrative took some time and we had reached my door. I could but ask Monsieur Dorlange to come in, a courtesy which he accepted, observing that Monsieur de l'Estorade had probably returned and that he could take leave of him. My husband was, in fact, at home. I do not know whether Lucas, to fortify himself in advance against the rebuke I might justly bestow upon him, had tried to represent my conduct in an unfavorable light; or whether Monsieur de l'Estorade, feeling a jealous pang for the first time in his life, àpropos of my maternal escapade, found it more difficult to conceal that sentiment because it was unfamiliar to him; be that

as it may, he received us most ungraciously, saying to me that it was an unheard-of thing to dream of going out at that time of night, in such weather, to learn the condition of a sick boy who, by the very fact of his writing himself to tell of his illness, showed that it was not at all serious.

After I had allowed him to be utterly discourteous for some time, I considered it high time to cut the scene short.

"I wished to be able to sleep to-night," I said to him in a peremptory tone; "so I went to the college in a pelting rain; now I have returned by bright moonlight, and I beg you to observe that monsieur, after being kind enough to go out of his way to escort me, has taken the further trouble to come upstairs and pay his parting respects to you, as he leaves us to-morrow."

I have too much influence over Monsieur de l'Estorade on ordinary occasions for this call to order not to produce its effect; but I saw clearly that there was something of the displeased husband in his behavior, for, having attempted to use Monsieur Dorlange as a means of diversion, I soon discovered that I had simply made him a victim of my ogre of a husband's ill-humor, which he vented upon him in full force. After informing him that his candidacy had been a subject of much discussion at the minister's with whom he had dined, Monsieur de l'Estorade began by detailing with malicious glee all the reasons he had for fearing that a crushing defeat awaited him; that the electoral body of

Arcis-sur-Aube was one of those of whose support the ministry was most certain; that they had sent a man of rare skill down there, who had already been *at work* on the election for several days, and had despatched most satisfactory intelligence to the government. But these were only generalities, to which Monsieur Dorlange replied, by the way, with abundant modesty and with every appearance of having made up his mind beforehand to the varying chances to which his election might be exposed. Monsieur de l'Estorade held in reserve one last stroke which, under the circumstances, was likely to produce a tremendous effect, as it dealt a blow simultaneously at that candidate and the lover, assuming that there was a lover.

"Look you, my dear monsieur," said Monsieur de l'Estorade to his victim, "when you run the gauntlet of an election, you must reflect that you put everything at stake, your private as well as your public life. Your opponents search with pitiless hands your present and your past, and woe to him who comes forward with the slightest flaw in his armor! That being so, I ought not to conceal from you that, at the minister's this evening, a great deal was said of a little scandal which, although very pardonable in the life of an artist, assumes much more serious proportions in that of a man seeking the mandate of his fellow-citizens. You understand me: I refer to the fair Italian who lives in your house; be on your guard, you may very well be called to account by some puritanical elector

concerning the moral aspect of her presence under your roof."

Monsieur Dorlange's reply was very dignified.

"I have only one wish for those who may conceive the idea of questioning me concerning that detail of my private life," he said, "and that is that they may have no more painful memory in their own. If I had not already exhausted madame by an interminable tale during our return from the college, I would tell you the story of my fair Italian, monsieur le comte, and you would see that her presence in my house should not deprive me of the esteem which you have hitherto been kind enough to manifest."

"Why, you take my remark very tragically!" rejoined Monsieur de l'Estorade, suddenly softening when he learned that our long walk had been employed in story-telling: "For my own part, as I said just now, I can see nothing unnatural in an artist having a lovely model in his house, but it is not an article of furniture to be used by messieurs the politicians."

"The thing that seems better fitted for their use," replied Monsieur Dorlange, with much animation, "is the advantage that can be gained from a slander accepted with wicked eagerness and before any attempt at verification. However, far from dreading an explanation on the subject you mention, I desire it, and the ministry would do me a great service by instructing this wonderfully clever agent whom they have placed in my path, to raise that delicate question before the electors."

"You leave to-morrow, do you?" inquired Monsieur de l'Estorade, seeing that he had started on a course, which, instead of leading to Monsieur Dorlange's discomfiture, had afforded him an opportunity of replying with much loftiness of manner and of speech.

"Yes, and early in the morning, so that I shall have the honor of taking leave of you now, as I still have some preparations to make."

Thereupon Monsieur Dorlange rose, and, after a ceremonious bow to me, left the room, without offering his hand to Monsieur de l'Estorade, who did not offer him his.

"By the way! what was the matter with Armand?" asked Monsieur de l'Estorade, to avoid the inevitable explanation between us.

"Armand's trouble is of very small consequence," I replied, "as you must have guessed when you saw me return without him and without any indication of emotion; but a more interesting question is, what is the matter with you this evening, for I never saw you so out of temper, so sour and so impolite."

"Why? because I told a ridiculous candidate that he would have to wear mourning for his reputation?"

"In the first place, that was not a courteous thing to do, and in any event, the time was ill chosen with a man upon whom my maternal anxiety had just imposed an abominable duty."

"I am not fond of officious people," rejoined Monsieur de l'Estorade, adopting a much higher tone than he usually does with me. "When all is

said, if this gentleman had not been here to offer you his arm, you would not have taken this ill-advised excursion."

"You are wrong, for I should have taken it and in an even more ill-advised fashion, for I should have gone to the college alone, your servants being masters here and having declined to escort me."

"But you will certainly admit that if anyone had met you arm-in-arm with Monsieur Dorlange, in the Panthéon quarter, at half-past nine at night, it would have seemed a strange thing, to say the least."

Making a pretense of discovering at that moment what I had known for an hour, I cried:

"*Mon Dieu*, monsieur, after fifteen years of married life, do you do me the honor of being jealous for the first time? In that case I can understand why, notwithstanding your respect for the proprieties, you took advantage of my presence to interview Monsieur Dorlange on the subject—a most improper subject—of the woman who is supposed to be his mistress; it was downright perfidy of the blackest kind, and you were playing to ruin him in my esteem."

His purpose thus laid bare, my poor husband floundered about and could find at last no other expedient than to ring for Lucas, to whom he administered a stern reproof; that was the end of our explanation. However, although I had won that easy victory, the great petty events of that evening made an extremely unpleasant impression

upon me none the less. I had returned home well-pleased, I thought that I knew at last how to behave toward Monsieur Dorlange. To be frank I will not conceal from you that when he hurled at me his famous: *Do not pity me*, as women always have a little of the woman in them, I felt as if my self-esteem had sustained a slight bruise; but, as I went upstairs, I said to myself that the quick, emphatic tone in which those words were spoken entitled them to great credit. They were certainly the frank, artless explosion of genuine sentiment; that sentiment was not concerned with me, but was addressed with emphasis to another. I might therefore be fully reassured. But what think you of the conjugal dexterity which, while seeking to compromise in my thoughts a man with whom my mind was only too busily occupied, gave him an opportunity to appear in the most advantageous light and to stand forth in bolder relief than ever? For, it was impossible to be mistaken—the emotion with which Monsieur Dorlange repelled the insinuation concerning his conduct was the cry of a conscience which lives at peace with itself, and feels that it possesses the means of putting calumny to confusion. And so I ask you, dear madame, who is this man whose vulnerable side no one can find, and whom we have seen on two or three occasions behave like a hero, and that almost without seeming to be conscious of it, as if he never dwelt elsewhere than on the heights and that grandeur were his element? How can it be possible that that Italian woman is

nothing to him, despite all the indications to the contrary? In that case, in the midst of our petty, blighted morals, there must still be characters strong enough to run along the inclined plane of the most hazardous opportunities, without ever falling! What a nature is that, that can thus pass through all the bramble-bushes without leaving any of its fleece behind! And I thought of making a friend of that exceptional man.

Oh! let me not make a jest of the matter! Let this Dante Alighieri of sculpture become convinced at last that his Beatrice will never be restored to him, and let him suddenly return to me, as he has already done once, what will become of me? Can one ever be secure against the power of fascination such men exert? As Monsieur de Montriveau said to the poor Duchesse de Langeais, not only *must one not touch the axe*, but one must sedulously keep away from it, lest a ray from that polished, gleaming steel strike your eyes. Luckily Monsieur de l'Estorade is already ill-disposed toward this dangerous man; but monsieur le comte need have no fear, I shall take pains to nourish and cultivate that budding germ of hostility. Then, if Monsieur Dorlange should be elected, he and my husband would be in opposite camps, and political passion, thank God! has often cut short intimacies of longer standing and more firmly established than this.—"But he is your daughter's rescuer, but you were afraid of his falling in love with you, and he does not think of you; but he is a man of distinguished

intellect and exalted sentiments, and you have no possible cause of reproach against him!"—Excellent reasons all those, dear madame! Suffice it to say that he frightens me. Now, when I am frightened, I neither discuss nor agree, I simply look to see if I still have sufficient legs and breath, and then I just run and run until I feel that I am out of danger.

DORLANGE TO MARIE-GASTON

Paris, April, 1839.

On returning from the L'Estorade's, where I had been to make my adieux, I found, my dear friend, the letter in which you announce your approaching arrival. I will wait for you all day to-morrow, but at night I must start, without further delay, for Arcis-sur-Aube, where within a week my political imbroglio will reach its dénouement. What ups and downs I shall encounter in that Champenois town, which, it seems, I aspire to represent; upon what support and upon whose assistance am I to rely; in a word, who has undertaken to make my electoral bed?—of all this I am as entirely ignorant as I was a year ago, when I first received the news of my parliamentary calling. It is only a few days since I received a communication emanating from the paternal chancellor's office, postmarked Paris this time, not Stockholm. In view of the tenor of this document, I should not be at all surprised to find that the eminent functions performed by the mysterious

author of my being at a northern court are simply those of a Prussian corporal; for it is impossible to issue instructions couched in a more imperative, more peremptory tone, and dealing with such desperate minuteness with the most trivial details. The memorandum bears the following headline by way of title:

"WHAT MONSIEUR MY SON IS TO DO"

On receipt of *these presents,* I was to dispatch the *Sainte Ursule,* to overlook the packing and boxing in person, and then to send it by the fastest carrier to Mother Marie des Anges, superior of the community of Ursuline nuns at Arcis-sur-Aube (AUBE). Do you understand? without that supplementary direction, one might suppose that Arcis-*sur-Aube* is located in the department of Gironde or Finistère.—I was then to make a bargain with the messenger that the package—my *Sainte Ursule* has become a package—should be delivered without fail at the door of the chapel of the convent. Then I was given to understand that I must follow in a very few days, so as to be at said Arcis-sur-Aube on May 2nd at the latest. The affair is conducted in military fashion, you see; so that, instead of asking for a passport, I thought for a moment of going to the bureau of military administration and obtaining a soldier's route-memorandum, and traveling by stages at three sous the league. The hotel at which I am to stay is selected and indicated to me. I am

expected at the *Hôtel de la Poste;* for that reason I should have preferred the *Three Moors* or the *Silver Lion*, which I suppose they have at Arcis as elsewhere; I cannot put aside that whim. Again, I am instructed, on the eve of my departure, to cause announcement to be made in such newspapers as are at my service, that I propose to come forward as a candidate in the electoral arrondissement of Arcis-sur-Aube (AUBE), but to avoid making a profession of faith, which would be at once *useless and premature.* There was another injunction which, while it humiliates me a little, does not fail to give me some faith in all that is happening. *On the very morning* of my departure, I am to go to Mongenod Frères, and draw a further sum of two hundred and fifty thousand francs, which *is to be* deposited there in my name; *you will be very careful,* my instructions continue, *that the money is not lost or stolen, en route from Paris to Arcis-sur-Aube.* What do you think of this last article, my dear friend? This money *is to be* deposited; therefore it may not be, and suppose it isn't? And then, what am I to do with it at Arcis? I am to attack my election in the English fashion evidently, and that is why a profession of faith would be *useless and premature.* As for the recommendation not to lose the money or allow it to be stolen, don't you think that it makes a child of me in the most extraordinary way? Since I read that clause I have had a strong inclination to suck my thumb and order a padded cap.—But it's of no use for my father to put my

mind on the rack by all these strange performances; were it only for the respect I owe him, I would cry, like Bazile when speaking of Comte Almaviva: "That devil of a man always has his pockets full of irresistible arguments!" I let myself go therefore, with my eyes closed, with the current that draws me on, and, notwithstanding the news of your speedy arrival, to-morrow morning, after calling on Mongenod Frères, I shall gallantly set forth, picturing to myself the stupefaction of the good people of Arcis when they see me drop suddenly down among them, much like the little Jacks-in-the-box that fly up when you touch a spring.

I have already produced the desired effect in Paris. The *National* announced my candidacy yesterday morning in the most glowing terms, and it seems that I was on the table-cloth a long while to-night at the house of the Minister of the Interior, where Monsieur de l'Estorade dined. Let me hasten to add, still on the authority of Monsieur de l'Estorade, that the general feeling there was certainty of my non-success. The worst that the ministry had to fear in the arrondissement of Arcis was the nomination of a Left Centre candidate; as for the democratic party, which I claim to represent, it cannot even be said to exist there; but the Left Centre candidate has already been settled by the despatch of a courtier of the most alert and crafty species, and at the moment that my name is put forward, like a lost ball, the election of a conservative seems to be already assured. Among the

moving causes of my inevitable defeat, Monsieur de l'Estorade deigned to mention one detail concerning which, my dear friend, I am greatly surprised that you have not delivered a little moral lecture, for it was one of the most entertaining slanders put in circulation in the Montcornet salon by the highly-honored and highly-honorable Monsieur Bixiou. It has reference to a superb Italian, whom I am supposed to have brought with me from Italy, and to be now living with on most uncanonical terms. Tell me, what deterred you from demanding the explanations that the subject seemed to require? Did you consider the matter so disgraceful that you feared to offend my modesty by so much as referring to it? or have you sufficiently implicit confidence in my morals not to feel the need of being enlightened in that regard? I did not have time to enter into the necessary explanations with Monsieur de l'Estorade, nor have I the time now to offer them to you of my own free will. My purpose in mentioning this trivial incident is to lead up to something which I think I have noticed, and I leave it to you to verify the justness of my observation when you arrive.

I have a sort of idea that it would not be agreeable to Monsieur de l'Estorade to have me succeed in my electoral campaign. He never bestowed any great approbation upon my projects in that direction, and he has constantly tried to turn me away from them by arguments, all urged, it is true, from the point of view of my own interest. But now that the idea has taken shape and body and has gone so far as to

be talked about in ministerial salons, one gentleman begins to speak sharply, and, at the same time that he takes a sort of malevolent joy in prophesying defeat as my portion, behold he throws a charming little infamous slander at my head, beneath which he proposes to bury me in pure friendship. Why is this? I will tell you: the fact is that the dear man, although he was under obligation to me, was conscious of a superiority to me of which my election to the Chamber would deprive him, and it is not pleasant for him to renounce that superiority. After all, what is an artist, man of genius though he be, beside a peer of France, a personage who puts his hand to the guidance of the great political and social machine, a man who has access to the king and ministers, and who would have the right, if the impossible should happen and such audacity should seize him, to deposit a black ball against the Budget? Well, don't you see that I am ambitious, in my turn, to be such a man, such a privileged individual, and with even more prestige and authority in that insolent elective Chamber? Is not that fatuous and presuming beyond all measure? and so, monsieur le comte is in a rage. Nor is that all. Messieurs the titled politicians have a hobby, to-wit they have been initiated by a long course of study in a certain self-styled difficult science which they call the science of affairs, and which they alone have the right to understand and practise, as doctors say of medical science. They do not therefore patiently abide the thought that the first varlet who happens

along, a journalist for example, or, worse than that, an artist, a *carver of images*, should assume to insinuate himself into their domains and speak his mind there by their side. A poet, an artist, a writer may be endowed with faculties of a high order, they are willing to agree to that; their very professions import such faculties; but they are not statesmen. Even Chateaubriand, although he was more favorably situated than any one of us to procure a place in that governmental Olympus, was nevertheless turned out of doors, and one morning a very concise little note, signed Joseph de Villèle, dismissed him, a fitting fate for the author of *René*, *Atala* and other literary futilities. I am well aware that time and that tall posthumous child of our own whom we call posterity end by doing strict justice and putting every man in his place. About the year 2039, if the world deigns to last so long, people will have a clear idea, I trust, of what Canalis, Joseph Bridau, Daniel d'Arthez, Stidmann and Léon de Lora really were in 1839; whereas an infinitely small number of persons will know that at the same time Monsieur le Comte de l'Estorade was a peer of France and president of one of the chambers of the Cour des Comptes, Monsieur le Comte de Rastignac, Minister of Public Works, and Monsieur le Baron Martial de la Roche-Hugon, his brother-in-law, a diplomat and Councilor of State, employed on service more or less extraordinary. But, pending that tardy classification and that far-off readjustment of reputations, it does not seem to

me a bad idea to let these great geniuses of government know, from time to time, that unless a man's name be Richelieu or Colbert, he is exposed to rivalry on every side and forced to accept it. And so, from that ill-natured standpoint, I take pleasure in my enterprise, and, if I am elected,—unless you assure me that I put a wrong construction on L'Estorade's conduct this evening—I shall find more than one opportunity to make him understand, him and others too, that one can, when one chooses, climb the railings of their little private park and strut about there as their equals.

But I have chattered enough about myself, my dear friend, oblivious to the painful emotions that await you on your return here. How will you endure them? instead of putting them aside, will you not go obligingly to meet them, and will you not take a melancholy pleasure in reviving their bitterness? Great God! I will say to you of such great griefs as yours what I said to you a moment ago of our great geniuses of government: that we must consider them as they will appear in time and space, when they become intangible, imperceptible, and when biography seizes upon a man and they become of no more account than the hair that falls from his head when he combs it every morning. The lovely mad creature with whom you passed three years of intoxication, thought that she could put her hand where death was; but he, laughing at her arrangements, her plans, her refinements, her skill in bedecking life, abruptly and roughly seized

upon her. You were left behind, with youth, intellectual gifts, and also—and it is a great force, make no mistake—utter and premature disillusionment. Why do you not do as I do? why do you not join me in the political arena? Then there would be two of us to carry out the plan I have in mind, and we would show them what two decided and energetic men can do, harnessed together, as it were, and working together under the heavy yoke of justice and truth. But if you think that I am too much inclined to become epidemic and to inoculate everybody who comes along with my parliamentary yellow fever, at least return to the career of letters, in which you had already made a place for yourself, and ask your imagination to make you forget your heart, which talks to you too much of the past. For my part, I will make all the noise I can around you, and, even though the continuation of our correspondence should encroach upon my sleep, I will carefully keep you posted as to all the varying fortunes of the drama in which I am about to take part, in order to distract your mind, whether you will or not.

Reaching Paris without lodgings engaged beforehand, it will be very friendly of you and very much like the man you used to be, if you will take up your quarters in my house, instead of going to Ville d'Avray, which I consider an ill-advised and dangerous place of abode for you. You will be able to pass judgment yourself upon my fair housekeeper, and see how far she has been slandered and misunderstood. You will also be near L'Estorade,

upon whom I rely to console you; lastly, it would be a charming expiation of all the involuntary offences of which you may have been guilty toward me. At all events, I have given my instructions on that assumption and your room awaits you. The out-of-the-way quarter in which I live will be a transition from the noisy, infernal Paris to which I suspect it will be hard for you to accustom yourself anew. I live not far from Rue d'Enfer, where we once lived together, and where we had so many happy hours. What dreams, what projects we formed in those days, and how little real life has realized them! Our most frequent dream was glory, and that, the only one which life has apparently chosen to fulfill in some degree, we voluntarily abandon: you to suffer and weep, I to run after an unsubstantial relationship, upon which I don't know whether I shall have reason to congratulate myself some day or not! While the constantly changing tide of life has carried away everything, our dikes, our little gardens, our rose-bushes, our villas, one thing has remained at anchor—our long-standing, sacred friendship; do not squander it any more, I implore you, my dear prodigal child, and do not run the risk of falling out with that Northern court, of which I may perhaps some day be the Suger or the Sully.

P. S.—You have not yet arrived, my dear friend, and I close my letter, which will be handed to you by my housekeeper when you present yourself at my domicile, for I am very sure that your first visit will be to me; you will not know, of course, until

then, that I am absent. I went this morning to Mongenod Frères; the two hundred and fifty thousand francs were there, but a very extraordinary circumstance was connected with the deposit: the money was in the name of *Monsieur le Comte de Sallenauve, called Dorlange, sculptor, Rue de l'Ouest, 42.* Thus, notwithstanding a title which had never before been mine, the money was certainly intended for me, and it was paid over to me without objection. I had sufficient presence of mind, when talking with the cashier, not to seem too much astounded by my new name and my new title; but I had a private interview with the elder Monsieur Mongenod, a man who enjoys a most excellent reputation in the banking business, and to him I frankly expressed my surprise, asking him for explanations which I supposed he could give me. He could tell me nothing at all: the money had come to him through a Dutch banker, his correspondent at Rotterdam, and that is all he knows about it. Deuce take it! What is going on? Am I going to be a nobleman now? Has the moment come for my father to make himself known to me? I start upon my journey in a state of emotion and anxiety which you will understand. Until further orders, I shall direct my letters to you at my own house; if you do not decide to stay there, let me know your address soon, for it seems to me that we are going to have much to tell each other. Have no confidences with the L'Estorades, I beg you, and let all this be between ourselves.

*

DORLANGE TO MARIE-GASTON

Arcis-sur-Aube, May 3, 1839.

Last evening at seven o'clock, my dear friend, before Maître Achille Pigoult, royal notary at the residency of Arcis-sur-Aube, took place the obsequies and burial of Charles Dorlange, who, soon after, like a butterfly emerging from its chrysalis, reappeared in society under the name and features of Charles de Sallenauve, son of François-Henri-Pantaléon Dumirail, Marquis de Sallenauve. Herewith follows the narrative of the events preceding that brilliant and glorious transformation.

Setting out during the evening of May 1st from Paris, which city I left amid the excitement of all the official rejoicing of Sainte-Philippe's day, I made my entry into the town of Arcis on the next day in the afternoon, in conformity with the paternal command. You can imagine that my astonishment was by no means mild when, upon alighting from the coupé, I saw in the street in which the diligence had come to a halt, that slippery Jacques Bricheteau, whom I had not seen since our fateful meeting at Ile Saint-Louis. On this occasion, instead of conducting himself after the manner of Jean de Nivelle's dog, I beheld him come toward me, with a smile on his lips, and he offered me his hand, saying:

"At last, dear monsieur, we are almost at the end of our mysteries, and soon, I hope, you will cease to think that you have any reason to complain of me."

In the same breath, and as if acting under the impulse of a pressing anxiety, he asked me:

"Have you brought the money?"

"Yes," I replied, "it is neither lost nor stolen."

And I took from my pocket a wallet containing the two hundred and fifty thousand francs in bank-notes.

"Very good," said Jacques Bricheteau. "Now, let's go to the Hôtel de la Poste, where you know, doubtless, who is awaiting you?"

"No, indeed I do not," I replied.

"Did you not notice the designation under which the money was handed over to you?"

"On the contrary, that strange circumstance struck me at once, and I confess that it has kept my imagination busily at work."

"Well, in a very few moments we will remove entirely the veil of which we have taken pains to raise one corner, so that you might not come too rudely in contact with the great and fortunate event about to take place in your life."

"Is my father here?"

I asked the question eagerly, but without the profound emotion that would probably have been aroused within me by the thought of embracing a mother.

"Yes," replied Jacques Bricheteau, "your father

awaits you; but it is my duty to put you on your guard against a probable lack of warmth in his greeting. The marquis has suffered much; the life at court which he has led has accustomed him to give little external expression to his feelings; moreover, he has a horror of anything likely to suggest bourgeois manners; do not be surprised therefore by the coldly dignified and aristocratic reception which he may be disposed to give you; he is a good man at heart, and you will appreciate him more fully when you know him."

"Well," I thought, "these are extremely cheerful preliminaries!"

And as I did not feel very emotionally inclined myself, I anticipated that this first interview would be marked throughout by a temperature below zero.

On entering the room where the marquis was waiting for me, I saw a very tall, very thin and very bald man seated at a table on which he was arranging papers. At the noise we made in opening the door, he pushed his spectacles on top of his head, rested his hands on the arms of his chair, and waited, with his face turned toward us.

"Monsieur le Comte de Sallenauve!" said Jacques Bricheteau, imparting to the announcement all the solemnity that an introducer of ambassadors or a chamberlain could have put into the words.

Meanwhile, the presence of the man to whom I owed my being had melted my ice in an instant, and, as I went up to him with a quick, eager movement, I felt the tears coming to my eyes. He did

not rise. Not the slightest trace of emotion appeared upon his features, which bore the stamp of distinction that used to be called the *grand air;* he contented himself with putting out his hand, shook mine in a limp sort of way, and said:

"Take a seat, monsieur; I have not the right as yet to call you my son."

When Jacques Bricheteau and I were seated, this extraordinary parent continued:

"So you have no reluctance to accept the political situation which we are trying to secure for you?"

"On the contrary," I replied, "although the idea took me by surprise at first, I soon became accustomed to it, and I have carefully followed all the orders transmitted to me, in order to assure its success."

"Excellent," said the marquis, taking from the table a gold snuff-box, which he began to turn about in his fingers.

"Now," he added, after a moment's pause, "I owe you some explanations, and our friend Jacques Bricheteau, if he will be kind enough to do so, will give them to you." Which was equivalent to the old royal formula: *My chancellor will tell you the rest.*

"To go back to the beginning," said Jacques Bricheteau, accepting the power of attorney thus conferred upon him, "I must inform you first of all, my dear monsieur, that you are not a Sallenauve by direct descent. Monsieur le marquis, returning from the emigration, about 1808, made the acquaintance

of your mother, about the same time, and early in 1809 you became the fruit of that connection. Your birth, as you already know, cost your mother her life, and, as misfortunes never come singly, shortly after that painful loss, Monsieur de Sallenauve, being implicated in a conspiracy against the imperial throne, was compelled to leave the country. Being a native of Arcis like myself, monsieur le marquis deigned to honor me with his friendship, and, at the time of his second expatriation, he entrusted the care of your bringing up to me; I accepted the trust, I will not say eagerly, but with the liveliest gratitude."

At that word, the marquis held out his hand to Jacques Bricheteau, who was sitting within reach, and, after a silent grasp, which did not seem to me, by the way, to affect them tremendously, Jacques Bricheteau continued:

"The machinery of mysterious precautions with which I strove to encompass the commission I had undertaken was due to several reasons, and I can say that you have, in a certain sense, felt the rebound of all the governments that have succeeded one another in France since your birth. Under the Empire I was afraid that a government which had the reputation of not being indulgent to the aggressions that might be directed against it might visit your father's offences upon you, and that was how the idea of arranging a sort of anonymous existence for you first took shape in my mind. Under the Restoration, I had occasion to dread enemies of another sort: the Sallenauve family, which has no

other representative to-day than Monsieur le Marquis here, was then all-powerful. They had got wind of your birth, and they did not fail to remark that the author of your being had taken the precaution not to acknowledge you, so that he might be able to leave you the whole of his fortune, a portion of which the law would have denied you as a natural child. The obscurity in which I had thus far kept you seemed to me the best protection against the persecutions of covetous kindred; and certain suspicious manœuvres from that direction, renewed several times in my neighborhood, proved the accuracy of my anticipations. Lastly, under the government of July, I was afraid of myself in your behalf. I viewed with profound regret the establishment of the new order of things, and, as one is prone to do under all governments with which one is not in sympathy, not believing in its duration, I allowed myself to be drawn into some actively hostile enterprises, which brought me to the notice of the police."

At that point the recollection of the diametrically opposite suspicion under which Jacques Bricheteau had fallen at the Café des Arts, caused a smile to pass over my face, whereupon the *chancellor* paused, and asked with very marked gravity:

"Is the explanation which I have the honor to offer you so unfortunate as to seem improbable to you?"

When I had told him the cause of my facial distortion, he continued:

"That waiter was not altogether mistaken, for I have been employed for many years at the prefecture of police, in the health department, but I do not undertake anything in the nature of espionage, on the other hand I have more than once come very near being the victim of it. Now, to return to the secrecy with which I continued to surround our connection, although I did not apprehend downright persecution for you as the result of that relation, should it become known, it seemed to me that it might, under those circumstances, injure your career. 'Sculptors,' I said to myself, 'cannot live without the support of the government; I may perhaps be the cause of preventing his procuring orders.' I ought to say, further, that at the time when I informed you that your allowance would no longer be paid, I had lost all trace of monsieur le marquis for several years. Of what use was it to divulge to you the secret of a past which no longer seemed to promise a brilliant future? I resolved therefore to leave you in your entire ignorance, and busied myself inventing a fable which, while allaying your curiosity, would relieve me from the deprivation I had long imposed upon myself by avoiding up to that time all direct communication with you."

"The man whom you employed to represent you," I interposed, "may have been wisely selected from the standpoint of mystery, but you will agree that he was not an attractive object personally."

"Poor Gorenflot!" replied the organist with a laugh, "he is one of the bell-ringers of the parish

church and the man who blows the organ for me. I don't know whether the author of *Notre-Dame de Paris* knew of him when he invented his Quasimodo."

During that parenthetical remark a most absurd noise assailed our ears: a very pronounced snore from my father gave us to understand either that he took no great interest in the explanations furnished in his name, or that he considered his proxy somewhat prolix. I cannot say whether the self-esteem of the insulted orator aroused Jacques Bricheteau to that pitch, but he rose impatiently and shook the sleeper roughly by the arm, crying:

"Well, well, marquis! if you sleep like this in the council of ministers, that must be a well-governed country of yours!"

Monsieur de Sallenauve opened his eyes, shook himself, then said, addressing himself to me:

"I beg your pardon, monsieur le comte, but I traveled by post ten nights, without stopping, in order to be here at the time you were told to arrive; and although I slept in a bed last night, I feel a little fatigued still."

With that he rose, took a generous pinch of snuff and began to walk up and down the room, while Jacques Bricheteau continued as follows:

"A little more than a year ago, I received at last a letter from your father; he explained his long silence, set forth his plans for you and the necessity of his maintaining the strictest *incognito*, so far as you were concerned, perhaps, for several years more.

It was just about that time that chance threw you in my way; then I found that you were all ready to resort to insane methods to fathom a secret whose existence had become manifest to you."

"You change your residence quickly," I said, smiling at the ex-dweller on Quai de Béthune.

"I do better than that: being terribly disturbed at the thought that at the very moment that monsieur le marquis declared that continued secrecy was necessary, you had, in spite of my precautions, penetrated the darkness with which I had so cunningly encompassed you—"

"You started for Stockholm?"

"No: for your father's residence, and at Stockholm I mailed the letter that he gave me for you."

"But I don't quite understand—"

"Nothing can be easier to understand, however," said the marquis in a knowing tone; "I don't live in Sweden, and we wanted to throw you off the scent."

"Do you wish to continue in my place?" said Jacques Bricheteau, apparently little inclined to allow himself to be taken from the floor, where, as you may have noticed, he acquits himself with elegance and fluency.

"No, no, go on," said the marquis, "you are doing beautifully."

"The presence of monsieur le marquis," said Bricheteau, "will not result, I ought perhaps to tell you, in putting an end immediately to all the

mystery in which his relations with you have heretofore been involved. Out of regard for his own future as well as yours, he deems it proper to leave you in ignorance for some time to come of the identity of the country in whose government he hopes that you will some day take your seat by his side, as well as of some other details of his life. Indeed, his presence here to-day is due especially to his desire to avoid further explanations and to request your curiosity to grant him a new lease. As I had persuaded myself that your equivocal family position was of a nature to cause you some mortification at least, if not to place genuine obstacles in your way in the political career upon which you are about to enter, your father, acting upon my observations on that subject in one of my letters, determined to hasten the moment of the formal legal acknowledgment which the extinction of his whole family makes most desirable for you; and he has come from the distant country where his home now is, to take the necessary steps. But the acknowledgment of a natural child is a solemn act which the law has surrounded with minute precautions. There must be an authentic acknowledgment in writing, executed before a notary, and, even if a special power of attorney would be a legal substitute for the personal assent of the father, monsieur le marquis soon reflected that the inevitable publicity attending the authentication of such a power would result in noising abroad, not only here, but in the country where he has taken a wife and

AT THE HÔTEL DE LA POSTE

A very pronounced snore from my father gave us to understand either that he took no great interest in the explanations furnished in his name, or that he considered his proxy somewhat prolix. I cannot say whether the self-esteem of the insulted orator aroused Jacques Bricheteau to that pitch, but he rose impatiently and shook the sleeper roughly by the arm, crying:

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become naturalized, so to speak, the secret of his identity, which he is desirous to conceal for some time to come. Thereupon he made up his mind at once: finding a way to escape for a few weeks, he traveled to France with all speed, took me by surprise and appointed a meeting with you here. But he feared that the considerable sum of money intended to ensure your success in the election would incur some risk in the long and rapid journey he was about to take; so he forwarded it through the medium of bankers, requiring that it should be payable on a certain day. That is why, on your arrival here, I asked you a question that may have surprised you. Now, I ask you another question, and this is of more importance: Do you consent to take Monsieur de Sallenauve's name and to be acknowledged as his son?"

"I am no lawyer," I replied, "but I should suppose that it would not lie with me to decline the proposed acknowledgment, assuming even that I did not feel deeply honored thereby."

"Excuse me," rejoined Jacques Bricheteau, "you might be the son of an undesirable father, and consequently be interested in contesting his paternity, and, under the peculiar circumstances of this case, you could probably argue successfully against the favor proposed to be conferred upon you. I ought to tell you, furthermore,—and in speaking thus I am sure that I express the intentions of monsieur your father,—if you should conclude that a man who has already put out half a million in the interest

of your election is not a suitable father, we should leave you entirely free, and should not insist in the least."

"Exactly, exactly," assented Monsieur de Sallenauve, uttering the words with an abrupt enunciation and in an uncertain tone, characteristic of the remains of the old aristocracy.

Politeness, if nothing else, compelled me to say that I accepted most heartily the proffered paternity; to the few words which I uttered to that purport Jacques Bricheteau replied:

"We do not propose, by the way, to make you buy *a pig in a poke*. Not so much to induce a confidence which he believes that he has now obtained, as to put you in a way to know the history of the family whose name you are to bear, monsieur le marquis will place before you all the deeds and documents in his possession; furthermore, although he left the country many years ago, he will be able to establish his identity by the testimony of several of his contemporaries who are still alive, all of which cannot fail to result to the advantage of the act of acknowledgment. For example, among the respectable persons by whom he has already been recognized, I may mention the worshipful superior of the community of Ursuline nuns, Mother Marie des Anges, for whom, let me say, in passing, you have executed a masterpiece."

"Yes, yes, on my word, it's a pretty bit of work," said the marquis, "and if you're a politician of that stamp!"—

"Well, marquis," said Jacques Bricheteau, who seemed to lead him a little, "are you ready to proceed with our young friend, to verify the family papers?"

"Oh! that is unnecessary," I replied.

To tell the truth it did not seem to me that, by declining to enter into that examination, I pledged my faith to any great extent; for what do papers amount to in the hands of a man who may have forged them or stolen them?

But my father would not let me off, and for more than two hours he exhibited parchments, genealogical trees, contracts, letters-patent, from all of which it results that the Sallenauve family is, next to the Cinq-Cygnes, the oldest family in Champagne in general and in the department of the Aube in particular. I should add that the exhibition of all these archives was accompanied by an infinite number of oral details, which placed the identity of the last Marquis de Sallenauve almost beyond question. Upon every other subject my father is taciturn enough; he does not seem to me to be extraordinarily frank, and he is very ready to yield the floor to his *chancellor:* but, when he came to his parchments, he was fairly bewildering with his anecdotes, his souvenirs and his heraldic lore; in short, he was the perfect type of the old gentleman with little or no information on any useful subject, but as erudite as a Benedictine monk when upon matters connected with his family. The session would have lasted until now, I believe, except for

the intervention of Jacques Bricheteau; when he saw that the marquis was on the point of supplementing his vast oral commentaries by reading a voluminous memorial written for the purpose of refuting a chapter in the *Historiettes* of Tallemant des Réaux which does not redound to the greater glory of the Sallenauves, the judicious organist observed that it was time to dine, if we wished to be at Maître Achille Pigoult's office promptly at seven o'clock, for which hour an appointment had been made. We dined therefore, not at the table d'hôte, but in our apartments, and there was nothing worthy of remark about the repast, except its excessive length, due to the silent meditation and the moderation with which the marquis masticates his food as a result of the loss of all his teeth. At seven o'clock we were at Maître Achille Pigoult's. —But it is nearly two o'clock A. M. and I am dead with sleep: I will postpone until to-morrow, therefore, the continuation of this letter, and a circumstantial narrative of what took place in the office of the royal notary—assuming that I shall have leisure then. You know the gross result, by the way, like a man who turns over to the last page of a novel to see if *Evelina marries Arthur*, and you can give me credit for the details. When I go to bed, a moment hence, I shall say to myself: "Good-night, Monsieur de Sallenauve!" Do you know, that devil of a Bricheteau didn't show much tact in blanketing me with that name of Dorlange: I seemed like the hero of a novel of the time of the Empire, or one of the

provincial tenors who wait for an engagement under the leafless trees of the Palais-Royal. You don't take it ill of me, do you, that I leave you for my bed, where I propose to fall asleep to the gentle murmur of the Aube? From my room, amid the indescribable silence of the night, in a small provincial town, I hear the sad plashing of its waves.

May 4th, 5 o'clock in the morning.

I had counted upon slumber embellished by sweetest dreams; I slept no more than an hour, and I awoke with a hideous thought gnawing at my heart; but before I transmit it to you, for perhaps it is devoid of common-sense, let me tell you what happened last night at the notary's; it may be that certain details of that scene have some connection with the phantasmagorical commotion that has taken place in my mind. After Maître Pigoult's servant, a pure-blooded Champenois, had led us through an office of most ancient and venerable aspect, where there were no clerks doing evening work as they do in Paris, the girl ushered us into the master's study, a large room, cold and damp, and very imperfectly lighted by two tallow candles on the desk. Although a sharp north wind was blowing out of doors, on the faith of the month of May as sung by the poets and of the fact that spring is legally declared to have come at that time of year, there was no fire lighted; but all the preparations had been made for a cheerful blaze on the hearth. Maître Achille Pigoult, a meagre little man, horribly pock-marked

and afflicted with green spectacles, over which, however, he flashes a remarkably keen and intelligent glance, asked us if it were warm enough in the room. Upon our reply in the affirmative, which he evidently considered to be dictated in some measure by courtesy, he had already carried out his incendiary purpose so far as to strike a match, when, from one of the darkest corners of the room, a cracked and trembling voice, whose proprietor we had not before noticed, intervened to remonstrate against such prodigality.

"No, no, Achille, don't light the fire!" cried the old man; "there are five of us and the candles give out a great deal of heat, and it will be so hot soon we can't stand it."

The words of the warm-blooded Nestor were followed by this exclamation from the marquis:

"Why, that is the excellent Monsieur Pigoult, formerly justice of the peace!"

Thus identified, the old man rose and went to my father, whom he scrutinized with interest.

"*Parbleu!*" he said, "I recognize you too as a Champenois of the old stock, and Achille did not lie to me when he said I was going to see two persons of my acquaintance. You," he added, addressing the organist, "you are little Bricheteau, the nephew of our good superior, Mother Marie des Anges; but this tall, thin fellow, with his duke and peer's face, I can't fit a name to him; but you mustn't be too hard on my memory; after eighty-six years' use, it may well be a little rusty."

"Come, grandfather," then said Achille Pigoult, "search your memory, and you, gentlemen, don't speak or make a gesture, for it is a question of conscience with me. I haven't the honor of knowing the client for whom I am about to act, and, in order that everything may be regular, it is essential that his identity be proved to my satisfaction. The ordinance of Louis XII., promulgated in 1498, and that of François I., in renewal thereof, in 1535, made this precaution obligatory upon *garde-note* notaries, to avoid the substitution of persons in documents. That provision of law is too well-founded in good sense to have been abrogated by time, and I am very sure that I myself should not have the slightest confidence in the validity of a deed, as to which it might be proved that that precaution was neglected."

While his grandson was speaking, old Pigoult had put his memory to the torture. My father luckily has a nervous affection of the facial muscles which, under the fixed scrutiny of his *certifier*, could not fail to become aggravated. By the aid of that symbol, working at full pressure, the former justice of the peace at last recognized his man.

"Ah! *parbleu!* I have it!" he cried, "monsieur is the Marquis de Sallenauve, who used to be called the *Grimacier*, and who would be the owner of the château of Arcis to-day, if he had not emigrated, like all the other fools, instead of marrying his pretty cousin, who would have brought it to him as her dowry."

"Still rather *sans-culotte*, apparently," rejoined the marquis with a laugh.

"Messieurs," interposed the notary with much solemnity, "the test that I arranged is to my mind decisive. That test, the muniments of title which monsieur le marquis was pleased to exhibit to me and which he leaves on deposit in my office, and, in addition, the certificate of his identity forwarded to me by Mother Marie des Anges, who is prevented by the rules of her institution from coming to my office to testify, certainly put us in a position to execute the documents which I have here, already drawn up. The presence of two witnesses is required by one of them. Here are Monsieur Bricheteau on the one hand, my grandfather on the other, if satisfactory to you; it seems to me that it is an honor to which he is rightfully entitled, for we might say that he has earned it at the point of his memory."

"Well, messieurs, let us take our places," said Jacques Bricheteau, with great eagerness.

The notary seated himself at his desk; we formed a circle about him, and the reading of one of the documents began. It was a formal acknowledgment by François-Henri-Pantaléon Dumirail, Marquis de Sallenauve, of myself as his son; but a difficulty arose in the course of the reading. Documents executed before a notary are null and void unless the domicile of the contracting parties is stated. Now what was my father's domicile? It had been left blank by the notary, who desired to fill in the gap before proceeding.

"As to domicile," said Achille Pigoult, "monsieur le marquis seems to have none in France, as he does not live here, and has owned no real estate here for many years."

"That is quite true," said the marquis in a more solemn tone, as it seemed to me, than the remark called for; "in France, I am a vagabond."

"Oho!" rejoined Jacques Bricheteau, "vagabonds like you, who can present their sons off-hand with enough money to buy châteaux, do not strike me as a sort of beggars to be greatly pitied. The remark is true, however, not only as to France, but as to foreign lands as well, for with your everlasting mania for traveling about, it doesn't seem to me a very easy matter to assign you a domicile."

"Look you," said Achille Pigoult, "we won't be balked by such a small matter. From this time," he continued, "monsieur," indicating me, "is proprietor of the château of Arcis, for an agreement to sell is as good as a sale, as soon as the thing sold and the price are agreed upon between the parties. Now, what is more natural than that the father's domicile should be credited to one of the estates belonging to his son, especially when that estate is a part of the estates of his family, restored to the family by means of a purchase effected for the son's benefit, but paid for with the father's funds; when, furthermore, the father was born in the province in which the estate in question, which I will call the *domiciliary* estate, is located, and is known and recognized there by some of the leading inhabitants,

whenever it suits him to appear there in the intervals between his long absences?"

"That is right," said old Pigoult, adopting without hesitation the opinion his grandson had delivered with the animation peculiar to men of business who think that they have placed their hand on a decisive argument.

"Well," said Jacques Bricheteau, "if you think it's all right—"

"You see that my father, an old practitioner, doesn't hesitate a moment to agree with me.—We will say then," continued the notary, taking his pen: 'François-Henri-Pantaléon Dumirail, Marquis de Sallenauve, domiciled with Monsieur Charles de Sallenauve, his natural son, by him legally acknowledged, at the place called the château of Arcis, arrondissement of Arcis-sur-Aube, department of the Aube.'"

The rest of the document was read through, and the end attained without further impediment.

Then ensued a decidedly ridiculous scene. After the documents had been signed, and while we were still standing:

"Now, Monsieur le Comte," said Jacques Bricheteau, "embrace your father."

My father opened his arms indifferently enough, and I rushed into them in cold blood, rebuking myself for not being more deeply moved and because the voice of blood did not sound louder in my heart. Were this coldness and lack of emotion connected with my rapid increase of fortune? However that

may be, a moment later, by virtue of another document to which we listened, I became, in consideration of the sum of one hundred and eighty thousand francs, the owner of the château of Arcis, a large building of attractive aspect, which, as I entered the town, being guided no more truly by the instinct of the landed proprietor than by the voice of blood, I had noticed in the distance, dominating the landscape with quite a feudal air. The electoral importance of that purchase, if I had had no premonition of it, would have been disclosed by a few words that the notary and Jacques Bricheteau exchanged. According to the habit of all vendors, who extol the merits of their wares even after they have passed out of their hands, Achille Pigoult remarked:

"You can flatter yourself that you have bought that estate for a mere song."

"Nonsense!" retorted Jacques Bricheteau; "how long have you had it on your hands? Your client would have let anybody else have it for a hundred and fifty thousand francs; but, as it's family property, you have made us pay for the fitness of the thing. It will cost twenty thousand francs to make the château habitable; the estate yields barely four thousand francs a year; so that we don't get two and a half per cent for our money, deducting expenses."

"What have you to complain of?" rejoined Achille Pigoult; "you are going to furnish employment, you will spend money in the province, and

that's not a bad recommendation for a candidate, to start with."

"Ah! we will discuss the electoral question to-morrow morning," said Bricheteau, "when we come to pay the purchase-money and arrange your fees."

Thereupon the party broke up and we returned to the Hôtel de la Poste, where, after bidding my father and his mouthpiece good-night, I repaired to my room to talk with you. Now I must tell you the horrible thought that has banished sleep from my eyes and caused me to take up my pen once more; although, at this moment, having diverted my mind somewhat by writing these two pages to you, the evidence doesn't seem so strong as it did a moment ago. One thing that is certain is that there is something prodigiously romantic in all that has taken place in my life for the past year. You will tell me that strange adventures seem to be a logical part of my existence; that my birth, the chance that brought us together, whose lots were so strangely similar, my relations with Marianina and my fair housekeeper, even my experience with Madame de l'Estorade, seem to indicate that I was born under a most adventurous star and that I am undergoing one of its caprices at this moment. Nothing could be more just than such a remark; but suppose that, at the same moment, by the influence of that star, I were involved, unknown to myself, in some infernal scheme and were made to serve as the passive instrument thereof!—To arrange my ideas in some order, I will begin with this half-million

of money expended, you will agree, for an extremely nebulous object: to enable me to become some day the possible minister of some imaginary country or other, the name of which is carefully concealed from me. And who expends these fabulous sums for me? A father fondly attached to a love-child? No, but a father who manifests the utmost indifference to me, who falls asleep while the balance-sheet of our mutual existence is being drawn off before his eyes; for whom, on my side, I have the misfortune of feeling no affection and whom, to speak frankly, I should look upon as a perfect idiot of an *émigré*, were it not for the filial respect and veneration which I strive to entertain for him.—But look you! suppose the man were not my father, were not even the Marquis de Sallenauve, as he pretends to be; suppose that, like the ill-fated Lucien de Rubempré—see *Lost Illusions* and *Splendors and Miseries of Courtesans*—whose story made such a terrible sensation, I were in the toils of some serpent like the false priest, Carlos Herrera, and in danger of such a terrible awakening!—"What probability is there of such a thing?" you will say: "Carlos Herrera had an interest in fascinating Lucien de Rubempré; but what hold could anybody have over you, a man of high principle, who have never dreamed of luxurious living, who have marked out for yourself a life of thought and work,—and why should anyone want to injure you?"—

Very good. But is it any more clear what they *seem* to want of me? Why should the man who

acknowledges me as his son conceal his place of abode from me, and the name by which he is known in that mysterious country of the North which he is supposed to govern? Why so little confidence in connection with such great sacrifices for my benefit? and do you think that Jacques Bricheteau, for all his long explanations, has sufficiently justified the mystery in which he has shrouded my life until to-day? Why that dwarf? Why his impudent denial of his own identity the first time that I met him? Why that frantic change of residence?

All these things, my dear fellow, rolling about in my head, and complicated by the five hundred thousand francs which I received at Mongenod Frères', seemed to give consistency to a strange idea at which you will laugh perhaps, but, which would not be without precedent in judicial annals. As I told you just now, it is a thought that suddenly invaded me, as it were, and for that very reason assumed in my mind the merit of an instinct. Certain it is that, if such a thought had occurred to me last night, I would rather have cut off my hand than sign that paper, which links my destiny henceforth to that of a perfect stranger, whose future may be as dark as a chapter of Dante's *Inferno*, and who may drag me with him into its blackest depths. Well, that idea, as to which I keep you in suspense, unable to make up my mind to confide it to you is, in all its artless nakedness, this: I am afraid of being made involuntarily the agent of one of the associations of counterfeiters

who, in order to put their false coins in circulation, have often been known, in the annals of the courts of assize, to resort to combinations and schemes as complicated and as inextricable as that in which I am to-day involved. In trials of that sort there is always much going and coming of the confederates; drafts drawn at distant places on the bankers of important commercial centres and capitals such as Paris, Stockholm and Rotterdam. Often also we hear of wretched dupes involved in their schemes. Really, do you not notice, in the mysterious conduct of this Bricheteau, a sort of imitation and reflection of all the manœuvres to which those great artists are forced to resort, executing them with a genius and a wealth of imagination to which not even novelists attain?

You will readily understand that I have used upon myself all the arguments calculated to discredit my gloomy presentiment, and, if I do not repeat them to you, it is because I choose to let them come from your mouth, and thus to give them the sanction of an authority which they would not have for me if I had myself inspired them. One thing is certain, if I am not mistaken, and that is, that there is around me a dense, unhealthy, opaque atmosphere, in which I feel a lack of air, and as if I could hardly breathe. However, if you are able to do it, reassure me, persuade me; as you can imagine, I ask nothing better than to be shown that my dream is false; but in any event I propose to have an explanation with my two men not later than to-morrow, and,

although it may already be a little late, to obtain more light than has yet been vouchsafed me.

But here's another story! While I was writing I heard horses in the street. Having become suspicious, and taking everything as a source of grievous anxiety, I opened my window, and saw by the early morning light, a post-chaise all harnessed standing at the door of the hotel, with the postilion in the saddle, and Jacques Bricheteau talking to some person inside, whose face I could not see, as it was shaded by the vizor of a traveling cap. Making up my mind at once, I ran rapidly down; but before I reached the foot of the stairs, I heard the dull rumbling of the carriage and the repeated cracking of the whip as it flew through the air, a sort of postilion's *Chant du départ.* At the foot of the staircase I found myself face to face with Jacques Bricheteau.

"What! up already, my dear pupil?" he said, without a sign of embarrassment and in the most natural manner.

"To be sure; it was the least I could do, to bid my excellent father good-bye."

"He preferred not," replied the damned musician with a gravity and phlegm that made me long to strike him, "he dreaded the emotion of a farewell interview."

"But he must be in a terrible hurry, that he could not give even one day to his ardent new paternity."

"What do you expect! he's an original; he has done what he came to do, and to his mind there is no further reason for him to remain."

"Ah! I understand, the important functions that he performs in that northern court!"

It was impossible to mistake the profoundly ironical accent with which I uttered that last sentence.

"Hitherto," said Bricheteau, "you have shown more faith."

"True, but I confess that my faith is beginning to grow restive under the weight of the mysteries which are heaped upon it, without pity or respite."

"When I see you, at a moment of the utmost importance to your future, giving way to doubts which the whole course of treatment to which you have been subjected for so many years most assuredly justifies, I should be in despair," answered Jacques Bricheteau, "if I had nothing but arguments or statements of my own with which to combat them. But you remember that old Pigoult last night mentioned an aunt of mine here in the province, where, I trust, you will soon discover that she occupies a position of some weight. I may add that the sacred character of her office imparts to her word unquestionable authority. In any event I had arranged that we should see her at some time during the day; but just give me time to shave and we will go at once, early as it is, to the Ursuline convent. There you can question Mother Marie des Anges, who has the reputation of a saint throughout the department of the Aube, and I am confident that after our interview with her, no cloud will remain between us."

While the devil of a man was speaking, there was upon his face an expression of such absolute probity and benevolence; his language, always calm, refined and self-controlled, found its way so irresistibly into his hearer's heart, that I felt the flood of my wrath recede and my sense of security gather new strength. In fact, his suggestion is unanswerable; the convent of Ursuline nuns cannot be a counterfeiter's workshop, deuce take it! and if Mother Marie des Anges becomes surety to me for my father, as it seems that she has already done to the notary, I should be mad to persist in my doubts.

"Very well," I said to Bricheteau, "I will go up and get my hat and wait for you on the bank of the river."

"Do so, and watch the hotel door, to make sure that I don't move away in a hurry, as I did from Quai de Béthune!"

No one can be more intelligent than this man; he seems to divine your thoughts. I was ashamed of my last suspicion, and I told him that, upon reflection, I preferred to finish a letter while I was waiting for him. This is the one, my dear friend, and I am obliged to close it and send it to the post at once if I want it to go. I postpone to another day the story of our visit to the convent.

MARIE-GASTON TO MADAME LA COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE

Arcis-sur-Aube, May 6, 1839.

MADAME,

In any case I should have been glad to take advantage of the request you were good enough to make, that I should write you during my stay here; but you will never know how truly charitable it is of you to grant me that inestimable privilege. Were it not for you, and for the honor which I shall have of talking to you thus from time to time, what would become of me, abandoned to the habitual domination of my sad thoughts, in a town which has neither society, nor business, nor objects of interest, nor suburbs, and where all intellectual activity is confined to the preparation of corned pork, and the manufacture of soft soap and cotton stockings and caps? Dorlange—whom I shall not always call by that name, for a reason which you will soon know—is so absorbed by his electoral schemes that I hardly catch a glimpse of him. I have told you, madame, that I decided to join my friend because one of his letters, in which he told me of a great revolution that had come to pass in his life, seemed to me to denote more or less mental disturbance. To-day it is possible for me to be more explicit. Dorlange knows who his father is, at last: he is the natural son of the Marquis de Sallenauve, the last surviving scion of one of the best families of Champagne.

Without vouchsafing any explanation of his reasons for keeping his son's birth so secret, the marquis has legally acknowledged him. At the same time, he purchased for him an estate which had long since passed out of the possession of the Sallenauve family, and which will in this way be connected with the name once more. The estate in question is situated here in Arcis, and it is reasonable to think therefore that its possession will not be without a useful bearing on the project of election to the Chamber which is on the carpet to-day. This project dates farther back than we thought and did not have its birth in Dorlange's caprice.

A year ago the marquis began to pave the way for it by sending his son a considerable sum of money, so that he might render himself eligible to the Chamber by the purchase of an estate, and it is for the same purpose of facilitating the candidate's entrance upon a political career that he has now given him a social status as a citizen and made him the owner of a second estate. The real object of all these sacrifices has not as yet been clearly explained to Charles de Sallenauve by the marquis his father, and it was on the subject of that portion of his horizon which is still shrouded in mist that the poor fellow conceived some genuine apprehensions, which my friendship earnestly impelled me to seek to allay. To cap the climax, the marquis seems to to be as odd as he is opulent, for, instead of remaining at Arcis, where his presence and his name might have contributed to the desired result of the election,

on the very next day to that on which the formal acknowledgment of his son was consummated, he started furtively for some distant country where he claims to have urgent business interests, and did not even give his son time to bid him farewell. Such coldness on his part cast a blight on Charles's joy, but we must take fathers as they come, for Dorlange and I are both living proofs of the fact that a man cannot have one for the wishing. Another peculiar freak on our gentleman's part is his choice, as his son's principal sponsor, of an old Ursuline nun, with whom he made a bargain, with the execution of which, as it turned out later, you were not wholly unconnected. Yes, madame, that *Sainte Ursule*, for which you posed at a distance and unwittingly, is destined, according to all appearances, to have considerable influence upon our friend's election.

This is what has happened. For many years Mother Marie des Anges, superior of the Ursuline convent of Arcis-sur-Aube, dreamed of erecting an image of her patron saint in the chapel of her community. But this lady, being a person of brains and good taste, would not hear of one of the brummagem saints that can be bought ready-made of dealers in church ornaments; and, on the other hand, she would never have ceased to reproach herself for robbing her poor of the considerable sum required to pay for a work of art made to order. The holy woman has a nephew who is an organist in Paris, and the Marquis de Sallenauve, while he

was flying around the world, had entrusted his son to the care of that organist, who had taken especial pains, for a very long time, to keep the poor child absolutely ignorant of his origin. When there was a suggestion of electing Sallenauve to the Chamber, they naturally thought of the arrondissement of Arcis, where his family is well remembered, and they cudgelled their brains to think of acquaintances and other means of forwarding his election likely to be found there. Thereupon the organist bethought himself of his aunt's perennial ambition; he knew that she possessed great influence in the province, where she lives in the odor of sanctity, and that she had a touch of that intriguing instinct which becomes passionately interested in projects whose execution is difficult and complicated; so he went to see her, by agreement with the Marquis de Sallenauve, and gave her to understand that one of the most talented sculptors in France stood ready to do homage to her with a statue executed in his most masterly style, if she would undertake to procure the artist's election as deputy for the arrondissement of Arcis at the approaching election. The old nun did not consider the enterprise beyond her strength. And lo! to-day she is in possession of the object she devoutly coveted, which came safely to port a few days since, and is already set up in the chapel of the convent, where its dedication with solemn ceremonial will soon take place. It remains to be seen how the excellent abbess will carry out her part of the bargain.

Well, madame, it seems a strange thing to say, but, after close inquiry and investigation, I should not be surprised if this extraordinary woman should succeed. According to the portrait our friend has given me of her, Mother Marie des Anges is a short, thickset woman, who still has the power to make her face attractive and winning under the wrinkles and the layer of saffron-hued pallor which time and the austerities of the cloister, acting together, have laid upon it. Carrying the weight of her embonpoint and of her seventy-seven years lightly, she is as spry and active and alert as the youngest. She has governed her community for more than fifty years, and it has always been the most exemplary and best-ordered, as well as the wealthiest, in the whole diocese of Troyes. Being admirably fitted for the education of youth—the main object, as you know, of the Ursuline sisterhood—she has, for the same length of time and with varying fortunes, maintained a boarding-school, celebrated throughout the department of the Aube and other neighboring districts. Having thus superintended the education of the daughters of all the best families in the province, you can readily believe that she has built up for herself a sort of ubiquitous influence among the aristocracy of Champagne by virtue of the relations which, as the result of a well-conducted education, are generally continued indefinitely between the teacher and her pupils; probably she knows how to make the most of those relations in the struggle in which she has promised to take a hand.

Furthermore, it appears that this strange woman has the absolute disposal of the votes of the democratic party in the whole arrondissement. Thus far, to be sure, the existence of that party in the place where the battle is to be fought is precarious and problematical; but it is by nature restless and active, and our candidate comes forward under its banner, practically speaking. Evidently, therefore, the support of which he is assured in that direction has its usefulness and importance. You will certainly admire, madame, as I did from the first, the bicephalous genius, so to speak, of this old nun, who finds a way to stand well with the nobility and secular clergy, and on the other hand leads by the nose the radical party, their eternal enemy. Charitable and enlightened to admiration, looked upon throughout the province as a saint, and exposed, during the Revolution, to horrible persecution, which she endured with rare courage, it is perfectly easy to understand her friendly relations with the higher and conservative classes; but does it not pass all understanding that she should be equally acceptable to democrats and demolishers? The supreme power that she exerts over the revolutionary party is referable, madame, to a little difficulty they once had together; about '93, that amiable party conspired to cut off her head. Being driven from her convent and convicted of having given shelter to a refractory priest, she was imprisoned, haled before the revolutionary tribunal, and sentenced to mount the scaffold. The *thing* was reported to Danton, who then had a

seat in the Convention. Danton had known Mother Marie des Anges; he considered her the most virtuous and most enlightened woman he had ever met. Upon being informed of her sentence, he flew into a frightful rage, wrote a letter *à cheval*, as they used to say in those days, to the revolutionary town authorities, and, speaking with an authority which no one in Arcis would have dreamed of questioning, ordered a reprieve. On the same day he ascended the tribune, and, after speaking in a general way of some *infernal idiots* who, by their foolish excesses, endangered the future of the Revolution, he told what Mother Marie des Anges was, dwelt upon her marvelous aptitude for instructing the young, and brought forward a draft of a decree by virtue of which she was to be at the head of a *great national gynæceum*, whose organization was to be provided for subsequently by another decree. Robespierre, who would have seen in the Ursuline's lofty intelligence naught but an additional argument for the immediate application of the revolutionary axe, was not present at that day's sitting, so that the motion was enthusiastically carried. Mother Marie des Anges's head being indispensably necessary to the proper execution of the decree just passed, she retained it, and the executioner took down his machine. Although the other decree establishing the *great national gynæceum* was lost sight of, under the pressure of other duties that occupied the attention of the Chamber, the good nun executed it in her own way, and, instead of something great and Greek

and national, she established, with the assistance of some of her former associates, a lay boarding-school, to which pupils flocked from all the surrounding country, as soon as a semblance of order had been restored in public affairs and in men's minds. Under the Empire Mother Marie des Anges was able to reconstitute her community, and the first act of her restored authority was a signal act of gratitude. She decreed that, every year, on the 5th of April, the anniversary of Danton's death, a service should be held for the repose of his soul in the convent chapel.

To those who remonstrated against this ceremony, she replied:

"Do you know many men for whom it is more necessary to implore the divine compassion?"

Under the Restoration the celebration of that service became a serious matter; but Mother Marie des Anges would never consent to abandon it, and the great veneration with which she is regarded compelled those who were most aroused over what they called a great scandal to submit to it. As you may imagine, her obstinate courage received its due reward under the government of July. To-day, Mother Marie des Anges enjoys the highest consideration at court, and there is nothing which she cannot obtain in the most exalted spheres; but it is fair to add that she asks for nothing, not even for alms for her poor, whom she finds means to assist generously by virtue of the excellent administrative methods she has introduced in the management of

the property of the community. You will understand even more readily that her gratitude for the great revolutionary hero has been a potent recommendation with the party of the Revolution; but that is not the whole secret of her influence in that party. The leader of the Advanced Left in Arcis is a rich miller, one Laurent Goussard, who owns two or three mills on the River Aube. This man, an ex-member of the revolutionary town-government of Arcis and a particular friend of Danton, was the man who wrote to the terrible Cordelier to inform him that the knife was suspended over the head of the former superior of the Ursulines—which did not, however, deter the excellent sans-culotte from purchasing a large part of the property of the community when it was sold as national property.

At the time when Mother Marie des Anges was authorized to re-establish her community, Laurent Goussard, who had not, it seems, made very much by his purchase, called upon the good abbess and proposed to restore the former dependencies of the convent. Being a very shrewd business man, Laurent Goussard, whose niece, who died in Paris in 1809, had been educated gratuitously by Mother Marie des Anges, pretended to feel indebted to her on that account, and offered to restore the property of which he had become the possessor by revolutionary title, if the community would agree to reimburse the purchase-money. The dear man would not then make a bad bargain, the difference between the hard cash and the *assignats* with which he had

paid for the property constituting a very pretty profit. But Mother Marie des Anges, remembering that Danton would not have been warned except for his intervention, proposed to do even better than that for her original rescuer. The Ursuline community was in an excellent condition, financially speaking, when Laurent Goussard made this proposition. It had received some exceedingly liberal gifts since its re-establishment, and, in addition, was enriched by all the funds which its superior had saved during the long existence of her lay boarding-school, and which she had generously turned into the treasure-chest of the convent. Laurent Goussard must have been dumfounded therefore when he heard her reply:

"Your proposition does not meet my approval. I cannot purchase at a reduced price; my conscience forbids me to do it. Before the Revolution the property of our abbey was appraised at so much; that is the price I propose to pay, and not the price to which it had fallen in sympathy with the depreciation in value undergone by all the so-called national property. In a word, my friend, I propose to pay more than you ask; tell me if that suits you."

Laurent Goussard thought at first that he had misunderstood or been misunderstood; but, when it was explained to him that he was indebted to Mother Marie des Anges's alleged conscientious scruples for a profit of about fifty thousand francs, he did not choose to do violence to such a delicate conscience, and, closing his fingers upon that profit, which really

fell into his lap from the skies, he went about telling every one of the marvelous proceeding, which, as you will see, madame, immediately gave Mother Marie des Anges such a place in the esteem of all purchasers of national property, that she will never have anything to fear from another Revolution. Personally Laurent Goussard became a sort of fanatical worshipper of her; he never does a stroke of business, never moves a bag of flour without going to consult her; and as she said jocosely the other day, if the whim should seize her to make of monsieur le sous-préfet a Saint John the Baptist, Laurent Goussard would bring her that functionary's head in a bag within fifteen minutes. Is not that equivalent to telling you, madame, that at the first sign from our superior, he will deliver his vote and those of all his friends to the candidate designated by her?

Mother Marie des Anges's influence naturally has extensive ramifications among the clergy, as well on account of her robe as of her reputation for exalted virtue; but among her most zealous servitors she reckons Monseigneur Troubert, bishop of the diocese, who, although a former member of the congregation—See the *Curé of Tours*—would by no means object to receive from the government of July an archbishopric leading to a cardinal's hat. Now, if Mother Marie des Anges would deign to write a line to the queen in furtherance of his ambition, which is justified, it must be confessed, by eminent and unquestionable talents, it is to be believed that its success would not be postponed

over-long. But one good turn deserves another, and if the superior of the Ursulines works for the archbishopric, Monseigneur de Troyes will work for her candidate; nor would it be a very difficult task for him, as the candidate for whom he would be expected to interest himself is a pronounced partisan of the principle of freedom of instruction, the only political question in which the clergy takes any interest at the moment. When you have the clergy, you are very near having the legitimist party, which, being also warmly in favor of freedom of instruction, is by no means dismayed, in its hatred of the monarchy of July, at the thought of an unnatural union with the radical party whenever the opportunity presents itself. The head of the legitimist party in the province is the house of Cinq-Cygne. The old marchioness, of whose haughty character and powerful will you are well aware, madame—See *A Dark Affair*—never comes to her Château de Cinq-Cygne without paying a visit to Mother Marie des Anges, who once had for a pupil her daughter Berthe, afterwards the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse. As for the latter's husband, he cannot escape us, for Daniel d'Arthez is my friend, as you know, and through D'Arthez we have, beyond a peradventure, the Princesse de Cadignan, mother of the pretty little duke on whom we are conspiring to lay our hands. Now, if we turn toward a quarter from which we must look for more resistance, toward the so-called conservative party, which we must not confuse with the

ministerial party, we find that its leader is the Comte de Gondreville, your husband's colleague in the Chamber of Peers. With him trains a very influential elector, his old friend, ex-mayor and ex-notary of Arcis, Grévin by name, who, in his turn, draws in his orbit an elector of equal importance, Maître Achille Pigoult, to whom he sold his office when he retired from business. But Mother Marie des Anges has a powerful lien upon the Comte de Gondreville through his daughter, the Maréchale de Carigliano. That great lady, being, as you know, a person of most exemplary piety, comes to the Ursulines almost every year for a season of humble seclusion. Furthermore, Mother Marie des Anges claims, without going into details, that she has old Gondreville on the hip by reason of a certain matter known only to herself; and it is a fact that the life of that ex-regicide, become senator, count of the Empire, and afterward peer of France under two dynasties, has wound its way through such tortuous underground passages that one can readily imagine secret openings which it would not be agreeable to him to have laid bare. Now, Gondreville means Grévin, his confidential friend and, as they say, his *âme damnée* for the past fifty years; but, assuming that the impossible happens, and that their everlasting alliance falls to pieces under the present circumstances, we are sure in any event of Achille Pigoult, Grévin's successor, who is, as Grévin was, the notary employed by the convent, and upon whom, at the time the papers were passed

in his office to consummate the sale of the estate purchased by the Marquis de Sallenauve, the purchasers were careful to bestow a fee of such abnormal and *electoral* proportions, that to accept it was to pledge his support. As for the common herd of electors, we cannot fail to make many recruits among them by the extensive works upon which our friend proposes to employ them in the château of which he is now the owner, the said château having the good fortune to threaten to fall in ruins at several points. We must also reckon upon the effect of a magnificent profession of faith which Charles de Sallenauve has just had printed, in which he declares flatly that he will not accept any office or any favor from the government. I may add that the clever oratory which may be expected from him at the preliminary meeting already announced; the support of the opposition papers, in Paris as well as on the spot; the insults and slanders which the ministerial organs have already begun to discharge, all tend to encourage my hopes, and I pause upon one last consideration. Would it be a very extraordinary thing if, with a view to give the lie to their somewhat Bœotian reputation, the Champenois should set their hearts upon electing a man of distinction in the arts, one of whose masterpieces they have before their eyes, who has come of his own free-will to take up his abode among them by purchasing an estate that has been almost ten years on the market without finding a purchaser, and who is on the point of restoring that estate, one

of the glories of the province, to its former condition of magnificence, with generous and lavish hand?

Will my words still be welcome, madame, if, upon the heels of this long statement of our resources and our military operations, I venture to complain of my entire lack of diversion? I do not know whether it is due to the interest I take in our friend, but it seems to me that the electoral fever, which is prevalent everywhere hereabouts, has taken a slight hold upon me, and perhaps you will consider that this letter, overladen as it is with local details in which, with the greatest good-will imaginable, you would hardly take a very lively interest, indicates that I have a severe attack of the prevailing disease. Moreover, will you thank me for representing to you as likely to be soon invested with the resplendent parliamentary halo, a man of whom you said to me the other day that no one could be sure of his friendship, in view of the unnatural and consequently somewhat impertinent grandeur of his personality? To tell you the truth, madame, whatever triumphs may be in store for Charles de Sallenauve in his political career, I am afraid that he will some day look back with regret to the more tranquil glory which was certain to be his in the career of art; but neither he nor I was born under a gracious and obliging star; even the bare privilege of being born was sold to us very dear, and it would be doubly cruel for us not to love each other. You have some kindly feeling for

me, because it seems to you that I still exhale a faint perfume of our beloved Louise; try therefore to have something of the same feeling for one whom, throughout this letter, I have not hesitated to call our friend. If, in whatever direction he turns, a sort of offensive grandeur of soul makes itself manifest in him, should we not rather pity him than call him sternly and deliberately to account therefor? and do we not both know, by cruel experience, that the noblest and most brilliant things are also the most prompt to fall and be blotted out in everlasting darkness?

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